



March 10, 2010

Dear Concerned Stakeholders of the Sepulveda VA:

Re: Misrepresentations of the Housing for Veterans project at the Sepulveda VA

Members of the North Hills West Neighborhood Council continue to perpetuate misinformation about New Directions, Inc. (NDI) and A Community of Friends' (ACOF) Housing for Veterans project in their efforts to stop affordable, supportive housing for disabled veterans at the Sepulveda VA campus. The most significant misrepresentation is that some members of the community have linked their request for a new hospital to their opposition of housing for disabled veterans. There is absolutely no reason that the VA is prohibited from building a new hospital at the Sepulveda VA because of the proposed housing project for disabled veterans. There is a total of 160 acres of land at the Sepulveda VA and if the VA believed that a hospital was needed at this time, there is more than enough buildable land to create a new hospital. The request for a new hospital is not an issue that has any relationship to NDI and ACOF's proposed housing for veterans, yet the neighborhood council continues to use this as a reason to oppose the project. Below are responses to other misrepresentations.

#### **Need**

Housing for homeless and disabled veterans is a clear need in Los Angeles. There are an estimated 20,000 homeless veterans in Los Angeles County. Currently, many homeless veterans leaving six month or year long transitional housing programs are still not able to locate affordable housing in the Los Angeles area. The proposed project would provide high quality affordable housing with on-site services for these veterans exiting transitional programs. It is a national and local disgrace that we have allowed so many of our nations heroes to become homeless. The Administration recognizes this and the VA has made it a top priority to end homelessness amongst veterans.

#### **Motive**

NDI is a non-profit veterans service organization, co-founded by a decorated Vietnam Veteran, that operates transitional housing and provides services for veterans only. ACOF is a non-profit organization that develops and operates affordable, supportive housing for homeless, disabled individuals and families in the Los Angeles region. Both organizations are guided by their missions and do not generate profits for private use.

It has been stated that the purpose of the Enhanced Use Leases for Buildings 4 and 5 at the Sepulveda VA is to permanently transfer the buildings and land to NDI and ACOF. This is not true. The intent of the VA is to have NDI and ACOF rehabilitate these buildings to create homes for homeless and disabled veterans. A letter from the VA clearly states that the

VA will retain ownership of the land. This letter was distributed to the North Hills West Neighborhood Council and many other Neighborhood Councils and veteran's groups throughout the San Fernando Valley. Neither NDI nor ACOF have any interest in owning the land or the buildings, as our mission is to serve veterans and people with special needs, not to amass property.

### **Project Support**

The claim that over 3 million people oppose this project is extremely misleading. While the organizations listed in Peggy Burgess' press release have voted in opposition to the proposed project, these votes were taken by the governing board of the organizations, not by all the members or constituents within the boundaries of the organization. For example, if the board of a neighborhood council (usually 10-15 people) votes to oppose the project, that does not mean that every person who lives in that neighborhood opposes the project as Ms. Burgess has continually and falsely claimed.

In several cases governing boards have not been unanimous in their vote to support Ms. Burgess' proposed resolution. Additionally, we have numerous support letters and petitions from individuals within the boundaries of the neighborhood council that "oppose" the project as well as support from veterans who are members of the organizations that "voted" to oppose the project.

### **Building Condition**

It has repeatedly been stated that Buildings 4 and 5 are in good condition and could be easily and cheaply converted into a hospital. Pictures have been circulated showing areas of the building to be "clean." However, both Buildings 4 and 5 would require substantial rehabilitation before occupancy for any use; especially for a modern hospital. New advances in medicine and technology render these buildings obsolete for use as a hospital. If a new hospital for veterans is to be built, we should be advocating for a new, state-of-the-art facility.

### **Cost**

There have been concerns about the cost of the proposed project which is estimated to be approximately \$40-\$45 million. There are substantial seismic upgrades that must be made to the buildings as well as hazardous material abatement. Prevailing wages are required which increases the cost. Additionally, there will be ample community space, classroom space, case management offices and a commercial style kitchen and dining facility for the veterans. All of these factors are accounted for in the total cost of the project but not accounted for in information distributed by others not as familiar with the project.

Veterans who will live at the proposed project will pay 1/3 of their monthly income, whatever number that may be, for rent.

### **Livability**

The studio apartments at the proposed project will be approximately 400 sq. ft. and each unit will contain a kitchen, a living area, sleeping area and a bathroom.

**Filming**

NDI and ACOF do not intend to use buildings 4 and 5 to generate revenue from filming.

Much more information is available about this worthwhile project to help our nations veterans. Please also review the attached VA issued Fact Sheet about the project and feel free to contact either ACOF or New Directions if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,



Toni Reinis  
Executive Director  
New Directions, Inc.



Dora Leong Gallo  
Chief Executive Officer  
A Community of Friends