



# PAVING THE WAY

## *Veterans Homes Construction Update*

APRIL 2019

## A New Vision for Michigan's Veterans Homes

Preparation work is underway – and on schedule – for the two new veterans homes in Grand Rapids and Macomb County's Chesterfield Township.

The new facilities will provide care in a modern, home-like setting that is veteran- and family-centered. Construction of both homes is slated to begin in mid-April and take about 21 months. Following construction, both homes will be prepped for members, with occupancy expected 2021.

Construction of the homes is a critical part of the State of Michigan's goal of modernizing long-term care for our veterans.

This special publication is part of an ongoing effort to provide updates regarding construction milestones, both in Chesterfield Township – site of the first veterans home in southeast Michigan – and in Grand Rapids, where the new home will continue the legacy of care to veterans begun in 1885.

## Laying the Groundwork

To date, more than 60 prospective contractors have visited the Grand Rapids and Chesterfield Township sites, including electrical, mechanical, concrete, carpentry and roofing companies. Some 40 bids were submitted, with veteran-owned businesses making up more than 10 percent of submissions.

In conjunction with the Michigan Department of Technology, Management and Budget (DTMB), The Christman Company has finalized a list of 23 contractors based on experience, price and capacity to handle large projects. Contracts are expected to be awarded in mid-April, pending grant approval from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

In preparation for construction, trees at both locations have been approved for clearing, with removal taking place from mid-March to early April.



“As we prepare for the construction of our new home, we are experiencing a bittersweet transition that is magnified by the fact that the new home is still two years away,” said **Tracey Nelson, Administrator of the Grand Rapids Home for Veterans (GRHV)**. “We have to place one foot in front of the other, knowing that we’re in this together until the opening happens.”

With the goal of minimizing tree removal, **only trees in the construction path and declining or dead trees will be cleared.**

Most of the tree removal will occur at Chesterfield Township because the site is undeveloped. Remaining trees at both locations will be used as part of landscaping.

The construction team for the new homes consists of:

- Owner Agency: **Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency/ Michigan Veterans Facility Authority**
- Design and Construction: **DTMB**
- Architect-Engineer: **TowerPinkster**
- Construction Management: **The Christman Company**



## The New Grand Rapids Home for Veterans

At GRHV, crews continue removing asbestos from existing facilities. Once finished, demolition will begin and take about a month. Demolition of the Rankin building, garage, smoking shelter, Chapel and other small courtyard structures is necessary to make way for the new home construction.

In late April, work is expected to begin with sitework and then on the community center and the two east neighborhood buildings, followed by the two west neighborhood buildings.

Throughout the construction phase, GRHV facilities will remain operational. However, there will be periods where parking lots and entrances will be closed:

- **Phase I (April 23, 2019 - May 21, 2019):** The south entrance will be closed for work on a new driveway and expansion of the parking lot. **Visitors and staff are to use the north entrance to the campus and designated turns around the main building entry.**
- **Phase II (May 22, 2019 - June 25, 2019):** The north entrance will be closed for work on utilities and a new driveway. **Visitors and staff are to use the south entrance to the campus and designated turns around the main building entry.**
- **Phase III (July 2019 - January 2021):** The north entrance will be closed for the remaining construction period. **Visitors and staff are to use the south entrance and new driveway in front of the McLeish Building.**

### *TIMELINE FOR CONSTRUCTION OF THE NEW GRHV*

#### **2019:**

- **March**
  - Asbestos removal
  - Tree clearing
  - Installation of perimeter fencing around construction zone to prepare for demolition
- **April**
  - Demolition of existing facilities
  - Replacement of underground water main pipes and other utilities
  - Construction begins
- **May**
  - Clearing of top soil, old pavement and sidewalk
  - Enlargement of parking lot located southwest of main facility entrance
  - Begin work on community center and neighborhood buildings
  - Public groundbreaking

#### **2020: Construction continues**

#### **2021:**

- **Spring:** Anticipated construction completion and certification survey period
- **Summer/Fall:** Facility open for full occupancy

## Q&A

As we prepare for construction to begin, members and staff have raised important questions. We address them below.

### **How is construction of the new veterans homes being funded?**

MVAA applied to the VA Home Construction Grant Program to fund construction of new veterans homes in Grand Rapids and southeast Michigan. As part of the grant application, the state of Michigan agreed to a 35 percent funding match for the project.

In 2017, the VA authorized \$88 million (65 percent federal contribution) in grant funding for the two projects. The Michigan Legislature provided \$49 million (35 percent state contribution) in funds toward the total construction project cost of \$137 million.

### **When will demolition start on existing facilities at Grand Rapids Home for Veterans (GRHV)?**

Asbestos removal started in February 2019, while full-scale demolition of the facility is scheduled to begin in late April.

### **What will happen to the members on 2 South?**

Members on 2 South will eventually be transferred to another room at GRHV that meets their needs. Members who live in a private room based on their care plan will continue to be housed in a private room. During the entire transition process, no veterans will be displaced and GRHV staff and volunteers will remain committed to providing quality experiences for all members.

### **Will there be designated smoking areas in the new homes?**

Yes. The MVFA Board and Michigan Legislature expressed a desire for the new homes to accommodate members who wish to smoke. Per the request of the MVFA Board, proposed smoking policies for the new homes are being drafted and will be formally considered by the Board prior to the new facilities opening.

### **Some members have been moved from the first floor to upper floors. Will those members, and all members, continue to have access to the outdoors courtyard?**

Yes. All members will continue to have supervised access to the courtyard, as well as planned activities when the weather warms up.

### **With the closing of the Chapel and the Kozy Korners recreation area due to the transition, what social options will be available for residents?**

The classroom on the first floor has been converted to a Chapel area, complete with a prayer room. This temporary Chapel area is available to members.

Kozy Corners is being moved to the back area of the dining room and should be ready for members in late March. A utilization study of the dining room during peak hours found there to be plenty of room for both diners and the temporary recreation area.

### **Will we have the Fishing derby and Carnival this year?**

Yes. We will have similar events but with a new spin in order to navigate the construction site and ensure the safety of our members, staff and volunteers.

### **Is there currently a waiting list to get into GRHV? Is the home stopping admissions?**

As of March 1, 2019, there is a small waiting list for our domiciliary (non-skilled nursing/independent living) unit. GRHV is at capacity as it continues to consolidate the number of beds in its current facility to eventually transition to the new facility with fewer rooms.

The census as of March 4 is at 251. Of those 251, 22 are part of the behavioral health unit and 22 are members of the domiciliary. These 44-member beds are not anticipated to move to the new facilities. So, the current skilled nursing bed census is at 206 members.

The new facilities will house 128 veterans each. In order to ensure that no member will be displaced during the transition to the new facilities, we have to lower our census to accommodate this goal.

The home will continue to take applications for skilled nursing, memory care, dementia care and domiciliary. As beds become available, applications will be reviewed, and members will be welcomed into the home based on the availability of a room that meets their requested placement and care requirements.

Based on current estimates, the wait period for placement at GRHV may exceed one year. If a veteran is looking for more immediate placement, the admissions office at GRHV can provide a list of private facilities that have contracts with the VA to provide skilled nursing and long-term care services across the state.

## Feels Like Home

Each site will house 128 members in four home-like **neighborhood buildings**. Measuring 29,000 square feet, each neighborhood building will include 32 resident rooms outfitted with private bedrooms and bathrooms, new furniture and amenities of a modern facility. Each neighborhood building will have a shared kitchen, dining facilities and living spaces.

The four neighborhood buildings will surround a 33,000-square-foot **community center**. The community center will house administrative offices, occupational and physical therapy spaces and

amenities that include a Chapel, café and bistro, multipurpose rooms, barbershop, beauty parlor and large space for full membership and community gatherings.

The buildings will all be connected, allowing members to move through the neighborhood buildings and community center while staying indoors.

The surrounding grounds will be designed for additional recreation and exercise opportunities with landscaped walking paths and gardens.



## Southeast Michigan Veterans Home

The new home in southeast Michigan will mirror the same construction process and timeline as the new Grand Rapids Home for Veterans.

### *SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN HOME TIMELINE FOR CONSTRUCTION*

#### **2019:**

- **March:** Tree clearing
- **April:** Construction begins with community center and neighborhood buildings

#### **2020:** Construction continues

#### **2021:**

- **Spring:** Anticipated construction completion and certification survey period
- **Summer/Fall:** Facility open for full occupancy