

## VA SUSTAINABLE LOCATIONS PROGRAM

- 1. REASON FOR ISSUE.** To establish the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Sustainable Locations Program policies.
- 2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS/MAJOR CHANGES.** This directive sets forth the policies and responsibilities for the implementation of the VA Sustainable Locations Program (VASLP), to comply with Federal sustainable building requirements, improve service to and health of Veterans, and meet internal sustainable building goals.
- 3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE.** The Office of Asset Enterprise Management (044), Office of the Assistant Secretary for Management (004) is responsible for the contents of this directive.
- 4. RELATED DIRECTIVE.** VA Directive 0056 - VA Sustainable Buildings Program
- 5. RESCISSIONS.** None

**CERTIFIED BY:**

**BY DIRECTION OF THE SECRETARY  
OF VETERANS AFFAIRS:**

/s/  
Roger W. Baker  
Assistant Secretary for  
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/s/  
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### 1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE.

a. VA's mission is to fulfill President Lincoln's promise, "To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan" by serving and honoring the men and women who are America's Veterans. The goal of the Green Management Program Service within VA's Office of Asset Enterprise Management (OAEM) is to lead the Department in becoming sustainable. This directive communicates the Department-wide policy to comply with "Implementing Instructions – Sustainable Locations for Federal Facilities." Section 5(b) of Executive Order (E.O.) 13514, "Federal Leadership in Environmental, Energy and Economic Performance" directed the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) to develop and disseminate these instructions. This policy directive will enhance VA's ability to serve and honor America's Veterans in accordance with E.O. 13514.

b. The VA Sustainable Locations Program (VASLP) is VA policy for optimizing the selection of facility sustainable locations. It applies to all VA facilities, including both VA-owned and VA-operated direct lease buildings.

### 2. POLICY.

a. **General.** The VASLP provides common procedures and standards to facilitate compliance with the White House CEQ implementing instructions for all Administrations and staff offices. VA shall evaluate the full range of impacts from location decisions and should identify cost-effective strategies to optimize space utilization. Nothing in this directive shall be construed to relieve VA from any obligations under the National Environmental Policy Act.

b. **Applicability and Context.** VA shall make responsible choices in the siting of Federal facilities, both owned and leased, to meet the mission. VA shall strike the appropriate balance among cost, security, and sustainability, and ensure competition. The optimal Federal location decision is the choice that meets VA mission needs at an appropriate cost, achieves the necessary level of security, and supports other Federal, state, and local goals. This policy and the implementing instructions are meant to ensure balanced decisions on new facility locations and more effective space utilization in both new and existing locations.

c. **Workplace Requirements for Sustainable Federal Locations.** In order to effectively incorporate sustainable location principles into VA business procedures, VA shall review workplace requirements for alignment with the intent of E.O. 13514 and:

(1) **Maximize Use of Existing Federal Space.** VA shall examine its existing locations and identify more efficient space utilization, including consolidation, hoteling, or co-location as well as collaborate with other agencies sharing similar types of assets or workspaces where mission alignment permits.

(2) Review Workplace Standards to Promote More Efficient Facility Development. VA shall review workplace standards and remove unnecessary impediments to efficient use of existing locations and sustainable future site development including space utilization rates, floor plate size, and other physical requirements. All requirements shall be reviewed and revised as appropriate in light of technological developments and new ways of doing business.

(3) Review Parking Demand for Single Occupancy Vehicles. VA shall examine practices for routinely providing employee parking and consider how location decisions affect demand for parking for employees and visitors.

**d. Principles for Sustainable Federal Locations.** VA shall adopt the Principles for Sustainable Federal Locations from the implementing instructions as VA policy. The four principles are:

(1) Advance local and regional planning goals: As set forth in section 2(f)(i) of E.O. 13514, agencies should advance regional and local integrated planning by participating in regional transportation planning and recognizing existing community transportation and other infrastructure. Section 2(f)(iii) requires that agencies ensure that “planning for new Federal facilities or new leases includes consideration of sites that are pedestrian friendly, near existing employment centers, and accessible to public transit, and emphasizes existing central cities and, in rural communities, existing or planned town centers.”

a. Prior to and during the space decision process, Federal agencies should, as appropriate, engage planning officials at the state, metropolitan, or municipal level to identify ways proposed agency actions can support community sustainability and potentially align Federal actions with local and regional long range plans and objectives. This coordination will help ensure that new Federal locations do not disproportionately impact the transportation infrastructure in a negative way or disrupt traffic patterns, while also supporting local goals and growth patterns.

b. In addition to the need for Federal agencies to consider local recommendations based on a variety of mission, cost, and other factors, agencies should consider such recommendations in light of E.O. 13514’s Federal sustainability and economic development goals.

(2) Seek location-efficient sites: Agencies should take the following actions to advance these principles.

a. Prioritize central business districts and rural town centers. Federal agencies should work to advance local and regional planning goals prioritizing facility locations in central cities and rural town centers. E.O. 12072 directs agencies to give “first consideration” to locating in central business areas, as defined by local officials. Similarly, E.O. 13514 directs agencies to emphasize such areas in central cities and in rural town centers to “strengthen the vitality and livability of the communities in which

Federal facilities are located.” Co-location and mixed-use siting of Federal facilities in central business districts and suburban/rural town centers can result in multiple sustainability benefits for the community.

b. Prioritize locations that promote transportation choice. Locations that provide robust transportation options promote ease of access for a variety of workers and visitors; help to reduce road congestion and GHG emissions associated with vehicle miles traveled (VMT); and leverage existing transportation infrastructure investment. Agency location decisions should take into consideration the promotion of a variety of transportation choices with a focus on encouraging public transportation and transit oriented development (TOD). Agencies may choose to integrate this consideration into their business practices through a variety of appropriate means. At the agency’s discretion, appropriate means may include establishment of an area of consideration, application of performance criteria, or use of selection factors that would give favorable consideration to the relative ability of a location to support transportation choice.

c. Promote walkable and bikeable sites. Walkable and bikeable sites are surrounded by a variety of businesses, services, and land uses in close proximity to one another, where they can be easily reached on foot and by bicycle. Locating workplaces in walkable and bikeable areas enables employees to accomplish routine tasks near their place of employment without getting in their cars, reducing driving emissions and congestion during the workday and supporting employee wellness by encouraging physical activity. Agency location decisions should take into consideration the relative walkability and bikeability of each location.

d. Locate in areas that are accessible to a diverse range of employees and visitors. Agencies should encourage through the planning process for Federal facilities locations that promote accessibility to housing that is affordable to current and potential employees of the proposed facility as well as visitors to that facility. Locating workspace and facilities in areas where current and potential employees have a greater opportunity for affordable housing allows employees to live closer to work, thereby inducing walking, biking and mass transit use for work and non-work trips, and minimizing vehicle usage.

(3) Maximize use of existing resources. Existing resources provide significant opportunities to advance sustainability in Federal facilities. Reuse of previously developed sites can help to revitalize communities, reduce sprawl, and minimize the need for costly new infrastructure and new development.

a. Leverage investment in existing infrastructure. Agencies should maximize the use of existing infrastructure and resources, wherever possible, by prioritizing areas that are currently well-served by water, sewer and other relevant public infrastructure. This infrastructure represents significant local and Federal investment for its construction and maintenance. Locations requiring additional state and local infrastructure investment to solely meet the Federal need should be minimized unless in support of comprehensive state and local plans.

b. Prioritize brownfield/grayfield and infill development. When possible, agencies should prioritize locations that would support the use of previously developed but currently abandoned or underused locations, including, as appropriate, those locations that have undergone proper remediation.

c. Promote the preservation of historic resources and other existing buildings. Agencies should place emphasis on examining the reuse potential of historic buildings and locating appropriate new buildings in historic districts. This reuse makes the most efficient use of already constructed buildings, supports preservation of historically significant structures, and promotes local economic development.

(4) Foster protection of the natural environment. E.O. 13514 instructs agencies to coordinate with regional programs for local ecosystem, watershed, and environmental management. Because many Federal facility decisions are small in scale and may not have a significant impact on a regional ecosystem alone, it is important for agencies to coordinate their facility activities, which over time may collectively have significant impact.

a. Preserve existing ecosystems. Agencies actions should lead by example by working to preserve environmental resources and considering the impact of the siting of Federal facilities on existing natural resource functions or the potential to disrupt efforts to restore or protect local ecosystems or natural resources. Agencies should take into consideration the Federal regulations and guidance on this issue.

b. Avoid development of green space. Wherever possible, agencies should strive to avoid development of agricultural and other previously undeveloped land.

c. Promote climate change adaptation planning. When considering new locations, agencies should take into consideration regional and agency climate adaptation planning to support well informed decisions. Further instructions can be found in the *Instructions for Implementing Climate Change Adaptation Planning In Accordance with E.O. 13514*, dated March 4, 2011.

**3. RESPONSIBILITIES.** VA recognizes that the responsibility for a successful VASLP lies with decisions made at each VA Administration and staff office. This section outlines the responsibilities of key officials.

a. **Deputy Secretary.** The Deputy Secretary is responsible for assuring VA incorporates the principles into the business processes of all Administrations and appropriate staff offices.

b. **Assistant Secretary for Acquisition, Logistics, and Construction.** The Assistant Secretary is responsible for assuring integration of the principles into VA site selection and lease procurement procedures.

c. **Assistant Secretary for Management.** The Assistant Secretary for Management is responsible for:

- (1) Assuring incorporation of the principles into applicable agency business practices;
- (2) Assuring the integration of the principles into written VA procedures for defining facility requirements and related funding requests.

d. **Director, Office of Construction and Facilities Management (OCFM).** The Director, OCFM shall incorporate the requirement of this directive and the instructions into site selection, lease procurement, and space determination business practices. In addition, OCFM shall:

- (1) Identify to OAEM significant facility or campus changes that occurred prior to January 2012 and assess challenges and impacts to workplace requirements if the principles were in effect as business practices.
- (2) Identify to OAEM significant facility or campus changes that are planned or anticipated to be implemented during FY 2012 and FY 2013 where the principles could be applied.

e. **Director, Office of Asset Enterprise Management (OAEM).** The Director, OAEM is designated as the Senior Sustainability Officer for VA and is responsible for Department-wide sustainable building policy and oversight of the VASLP. The director of OAEM is responsible for ensuring the development of this policy and the integration of the principles into the Strategic Sustainability Performance Plan (SSPP) including reporting in the SSPP:

- (1) Significant facility or campus changes that occurred prior to January 2012 and assess challenges and impacts to workplace requirements if the principles were in effect as business practices.
- (2) Significant facility or facility areas changes that are planned or anticipated to be implemented during FY 2012 and FY 2013 where the principles could be applied with annual updates.
- (3) Significant facility or facility areas changes that are planned or anticipated to be implemented during the next two to four years (FY 2014-2016).

f. **Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, and other Key Officials.** Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, and Other Key Official are responsible for assuring that the principles are applied as follows:

(1) The principles shall be incorporated into Administration and staff office ongoing business practices regarding facility site selection.

(2) The principles shall be addressed at the earliest phase of assessing new or expanded facility needs.

#### 4. DEFINITIONS.

a. **Department-wide Sustainability Survey** is a set of survey questions based on guiding principles and status of third party certification to estimate the level of sustainability for each facility.

b. **Energy Star Portfolio Manager** is an interactive energy management tool that allows VA to track and assess energy and water consumption across VA's entire portfolio of buildings in a secure online environment.

c. **Environmental Justice Strategy** is a high-level plan to ensure VA integrates the requirements of Executive Order 12898, "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority and Low-Income Populations" (February 1994) and the Memorandum of Understanding on Environmental Justice and E.O. 12898 (August 2011) into its mission, operations, and activities, including site selection for new facilities.

d. **Hoteling** is a method of supporting unassigned work space in an office environment. It frequently implies a reservation-based system. Hoteling allows increased employee density in an office as the desk to employee ratio is less than one.

e. **VA Climate Change Adaptation Directive** identifies the policies, responsibilities, and considerations to proactively adapting VA to the risks and impacts of climate change.

f. **VA Green Building Advisory Council** (VA GBAC) is comprised of members from the VA Administrations and key staff offices who provide advice, coordination, and recommendations related to the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding on Federal Leadership in High Performance and Sustainable Buildings.

g. **VA Sustainable Building Design Standards** are the design standards developed by the Administrations and staff offices to comply with federal sustainability requirements for the projects.

h. **VA Sustainable Building Guidebooks** are the standards developed by the Administrations and staff offices to comply with federal sustainability requirements for existing buildings.

i. **VA Sustainable Building Implementation Plan** (VA SBIP) is a supplement to the VA Green Building Action Plan, which serves as a blueprint for VA actions to achieve sustainable building goals, provides elements identified in OMB's guidance

through sustainable building score cards reporting process, and any sustainable building related Federal requirements.

j. **VA Sustainable Building Program Directive** is the policy statement regarding objectives, targets, strategies and tools for the Administrations and staff offices to implement and maintain sustainable building design and high performance buildings.

k. **VA Sustainable Building Program Handbook** prescribes the objectives, targets, strategies and tools for the Administrations and staff offices to implement and maintain sustainable building design and high performance buildings.

l. **VA Sustainable Design and Energy Reduction Manual** is a reference guide and source of design direction for energy reduction and sustainable design.

m. **Whole Building Design Guide** is a web-based portal providing government and industry practitioners with one-stop access to up-to-date information on a wide range of building-related guidance, criteria and technology from a 'whole buildings' perspective.

## 5. REFERENCES.

a. Federal laws, regulations, and guidance regarding sustainable siting of federal buildings include the following:

(1) Executive Order 13514, "Federal Leadership in Environmental, Energy, and Economic Performance,"

[http://www.whitehouse.gov/assets/documents/2009fedleader\\_eo\\_rel.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/assets/documents/2009fedleader_eo_rel.pdf)

(2) "Implementing Instructions – Sustainable Locations For Federal Buildings,"

[http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ceq/implementing\\_instructions\\_-\\_sustainable\\_locations\\_for\\_federal\\_facilities\\_9152011.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ceq/implementing_instructions_-_sustainable_locations_for_federal_facilities_9152011.pdf)

(3) Implementing instructions — Federal Agency Climate Change Adaptation Planning"(March 4,2011),

[http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ceq/adaptation\\_final\\_implementing\\_instructions\\_3\\_3.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ceq/adaptation_final_implementing_instructions_3_3.pdf)

(4) Executive Order 12898, "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority and Low-Income Populations,"

[http://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/resources/policy/exec\\_order\\_12898.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/resources/policy/exec_order_12898.pdf)

b. Internal VA documents relating to sustainable and high performance buildings include the following:

(1) VA Sustainable Building Implementation Plan

(2) VA Sustainability Guidebooks

(3) VA Sustainable Building Design Standards

(4) VA Sustainable Design and Energy Reduction Manual,  
<http://www.cfm.va.gov/til/sustain.asp>

c. When determining strategies for achieving sustainable and high performance buildings, the following resources may be found useful:

(1) Recommendations on Sustainable Siting for Federal Facilities,  
[http://www.fedcenter.gov/Documents/index.cfm?id=15263&pge\\_id=1606](http://www.fedcenter.gov/Documents/index.cfm?id=15263&pge_id=1606)

(2) DOE's Business Case for Sustainable Design in Federal Facilities,  
<http://www1.eere.energy.gov/femp/pdfs/bcsddoc.pdf>

(3) Federal Green Construction Guide for Specifiers,  
<http://www.wbdg.org/design/greenspec.php>

(4) Whole Building Design Guide, <http://www.wbdg.org/>

(5) Technical Guidance for Implementing the Guiding Principles for Federal Leadership in High Performance and Sustainable Buildings,  
[http://www.wbdg.org/references/sustainable\\_eo.php](http://www.wbdg.org/references/sustainable_eo.php)

(6) High Performance and Sustainable Building Guidance,  
[http://www.wbdg.org/pdfs/hpsb\\_guidance.pdf](http://www.wbdg.org/pdfs/hpsb_guidance.pdf)

(7) VA documents relating to environmental justice including the following:

a. VA Environmental Justice Strategy,  
[http://www.green.va.gov/docs/VA\\_EnvironmentalJusticeStrategy.pdf](http://www.green.va.gov/docs/VA_EnvironmentalJusticeStrategy.pdf)

b. Memorandum of Understanding on Environmental Justice and E.O. 12898,  
<http://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/resources/publications/interagency/ej-mou-2011-08.pdf>