

CONSENSUS REPORT

The Milwaukee VA National Soldiers Home Historic District Community Advisory Council is a diverse group of community representatives and stakeholders first convened in November 2011 by the Chicago Field Office of the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Milwaukee Preservation Alliance. The Council includes representation from the veteran, preservation and historical communities as well as representatives of neighborhoods, associations and organizations that have a vested interest in the District. The Council's purpose is to assist and advise stakeholders in the protection, repair and rehabilitation of the District by identifying and capitalizing upon opportunities to motivate the greater community and the VA to take steps to put the District, a National Historic Landmark, back into the service of veterans.

We, the members of the Council, believe that:

- The District, is a national treasure of vital importance to Milwaukee, the state and the nation;
- A number of the District's most important assets – especially Old Main, Ward Memorial Theater and the Chapel – are currently unused and in grave danger of being rendered unusable;
- These buildings should be restored to their original purpose – the service of veterans – through adaptive reuse of the buildings; and
- The Council is committed to working with the VA and other interested parties to identify, implement and support such an adaptive reuse.

Furthermore, the Council has reached consensus on the following **unmet needs of the veteran community**:

- Mental Health: Additional/Expanded PTSD and mental healthcare options
- Social: Social opportunities, including with other veterans and within the broader 'civilian' community
- Housing: Housing options for veterans and their families
- Education and Training: Easy-to-access veteran resources for information, aid and opportunity
- Centralization: Centralization of veteran services

The Council has agreed upon the following **potential reuses of the currently unoccupied District buildings** (Old Main, Ward Memorial Hall and the Chapel) that could directly address these unmet needs:

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| • Affordable housing (housing) | • Opportunity to locate and interact with fellow vets (education and training) |
| • Transitional and emergency housing (housing) | • Organic therapy/Urban gardens (social, mental health) |
| • Art and music therapy (social, mental health) | • Partnership with existing service providers (centralization) |
| • Assisted living facilities (housing) | • Peer to peer programming (mental health, social) |
| • Employment opportunities (education and training) | • Office/organizational space within the District for services already available throughout the region (centralization) |
| • Evening therapy sessions (mental health) | • Retreat events for veterans and families of veterans (social) |
| • Group therapy sessions (mental health) | • Social events (social) |
| • Holistic support (mental health, social) | • Transit options (education and training) |
| • Housing options for families of veterans receiving treatment (housing) | • Veteran performing arts groups (social) |
| • Museum to chronicle the history of veteran health care in Milwaukee and the nation (education and training) | |

Commitment

The Community Advisory Council: (1) agrees that these unmet needs and suggested building reuses should be considered by the VA, local, state and national decision makers and stakeholders as the master planning process for the Soldiers Home Historic District advances; and (2) the Council is committed to working together with these decision-makers to help make this vision for the District a reality.