

# Agency to develop multimillion-dollar housing campus for homeless veterans in Albuquerque

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An effort to get homeless veterans off the streets continues thanks to plans for a new residential community in Albuquerque.

Veterans Integration Centers (VIC) is moving forward with its initiative to develop a transitional housing campus. Jaynes Corp. and RBA Architecture PC will construct the facility set on a 3-acre lot within close proximity to Gibson Boulevard and Interstate 25.

"I think it's just going to be a wonderful opportunity for veterans and their families to enjoy," said Jerry Becker, board chairman for the nonprofit, when asked about the campus.

The transitional housing structure will be one of three buildings that make up the campus. The other two structures will be an administrative office and an affordable living, multifamily complex.

Established in 2005, VIC supports local homeless veterans by providing temporary shelter, housing assistance options as well as food and nutritional services, among other benefits.

Spanning 20,000 square feet, the transitional housing building will accommodate 42 veterans and 24 family members for up to a year. This \$6.7 million project is set to break ground as early as March 2023.



RBA ARCHITECTURE

Construction is set to begin on the new veterans' campus as early as February 2023. It is a project by Veterans Integration Centers to provide homeless veterans with transitional housing and eventually a permanent home at an affordable multifamily complex.

The two-story, 8,000-square-foot administrative building will house approximately 15 employees that perform supportive services for the veterans, food pantry, thrift store, wellness center and a classroom. The \$2 million development is scheduled to break ground by summer 2023.

While the exact square footage has not been determined yet, the affordable living building will rise three stories. It will have 33 units ranging from one to three bedrooms. This space will house up to 100 veterans and their families. The \$5.7 million development is set to break ground by summer 2024.

"We anticipate being fully funded going into the summer for Phase 1 and 2," Becker said.

The campus, when complete, will be a gated property with cameras, he said. The campus will have a walking path, kids' playground, basketball court and a dog park.

VIC applied for and received capital grant funding from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs for the development, Becker said. The agency had \$65 million left over from the CARES Act - the law signed in March 2020 to assist veterans during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The money was distributed to Transitional Housing Grantees, of which the VIC is the only VA grantee in New Mexico. VIC was awarded a grant of \$3.2 million in May 2022 and will be drawing on the funds when construction contracts have been completed, Becker said.

To continue building the financial means for the project, the VIC has created a fundraising committee and is reaching out to the community for financial support. Bernalillo County also contributed \$3.5 million to the effort.

"After the VIC received the VA grant to partially fund the critical Phase I of the campus, we looked for additional partners, and Bernalillo County stepped up in a significant way.

The commissioners and the entire team got it across the finish line and on behalf of the board and the VIC staff we will always be grateful," Becker said in an email to Albuquerque Business First. Becker specifically credited Bernalillo County Manager Julie Morgas Baca for her support.

Also, U.S. Rep. Melanie Stansbury (D, NM-1) has pledged to allocate \$300,000 from the Omnibus Bill that passed the Senate on Dec. 23, according to Julia Friedmann, press secretary for the congresswoman's office.

The City of Albuquerque agreed to contribute \$1 million toward the purchase of the land. Terrie Hertweck, vice president at Colliers International Albuquerque, represented the seller of the property. Bob Feinberg, senior vice president and principal at Colliers International Albuquerque represented the VIC.

### **Correction/Clarification**

A previous version of the article incorrectly stated what phases of development will be fully funded by summer 2023. Phase 1 and 2 will be fully funded by summer 2023.

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