

## **Northern California Veterans Home impress (*a DGS-managed project*)**

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The recently-completed Northern California Veterans Home, a sprawling 163,000-square-foot facility built on 26 acres near the Redding Municipal Airport along Knighton Road, should be bustling with activity as 244 employees serve the needs of 150 aging and infirm veterans.

Instead, the state-of-the-art cluster of five 30-bed neighborhoods connected with a Main Street of shops, administrative offices and living services sits empty except for seven employees, noted Linda Hartman, assistant administrator of the \$88 million care center that was supposed to open in January.

“We have 150 beds and 544 applications to fill those beds as of last week,” Hartman said as she led a group of almost 25 Leadership Redding alumni and steering committee members through the home on its first official tour.

The Democrat-controlled California Legislature passed a \$92 billion state budget by the Friday, June 15, deadline that is projected to have a deficit of \$15.7 billion includes \$4.8 million to open the Redding veterans nursing home in January 2013 and another \$5.5 million to simultaneously open a similar 300-bed, \$159 million veterans home in Fresno, where construction was completed in April.

That funding, however, is also tagged for an automatic trigger cut if state voters fail to pass in November a tax initiative proposed by Democratic Gov. Jerry Brown that would increase income taxes for people earning \$250,000 or more per year as well as increase the state sales tax by a quarter-cent for the next four years.

Gov. Brown projects the proposed tax increases will add \$8.5 billion in new revenues to help balance the deficit with unanticipated income from economic recovery making up the difference in the upcoming fiscal year that begins July 1.

“Because we have no funding, different operating systems in the building have shut down and we have had a lot of alarms going off,” said Hartman, who is learning the ins and outs of the facility’s computer-controlled systems even as she winds down her duties on the Shasta County Board of Supervisors representing District 4.

Her four-year term ends in early-January, confirmed Shasta County Administrative Officer Larry Lees.

Except for one conference room filled with wooden patio furniture destined for an outdoor courtyard, most of the veterans nursing home’s common rooms such as the dining room, chapel, clinic and sitting areas are devoid of furniture.

“We’ve ordered some of the furniture and we expect it to arrive in the next several weeks, but we haven’t ordered any of the beds yet because they are very high-tech beds and they do have a warranty. We don’t want the warranty to run out on beds that are unoccupied,” Hartman noted.

Each of the 150 single-occupant residential rooms include adequate space for a wheeled hospital bed as well as hook-ups for cable television, telephones, WiFi internet connection and a whole raft of medical equipment, she said.

“I’ve been to other (veterans) nursing homes in Los Angeles and Yountville and they are no where close to this one in terms of technology, convenience or quality,” Hartman said proudly.

“I recently spent a week at the Fresno facility, which is twice as big as this one with 300 beds, but I still don’t think it is near as nice as our facility,” she continued.

Each cluster of 30 rooms, called a neighborhood, offers a dining area available for reservation for special family events, a laundry facility for those able to care for their own needs, and a chapel where three on-staff chaplains will hold services and counseling sessions for those interested veterans, Hartman said.

Additionally, the memory care neighborhoods feature automatically locking doors and windows that are triggered by patients wearing a WanderGuard bracelet, she said.

Bubble-free whirlpool baths in the physical therapy spa use ultra-sound to stimulate and relax muscles since the noise of bubble jets in water can sometimes disturb those veterans suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome or even hearing loss, Hartman said.

Each neighborhood has its own enclosed courtyard, although the memory care units are protected with solid fencing.

An outdoor parade ground and exercise area behind the main building features a bocce ball and horseshoe pits, a putting green, walking trails, covered seating areas and enough vacant space for a community garden, she noted.

The Redding facility was constructed on a design-build basis by Costa Mesa-based Clark Design/Build of California Inc.

Engineering services were provided by Jacobs Engineering of Pasadena. *(The project was managed for the state by the DGS Real Estate Services Division.)*