

2.0 ALTERNATIVES, INCLUDING THE PROPOSED ACTION

This chapter describes the EA alternatives identification process, the alternatives considered and eliminated from further analysis, and the EA alternatives selected and retained for more detailed analysis.

2.1 IDENTIFICATION OF ALTERNATIVES

Identifying and analyzing alternatives is an important part of the NEPA decision making process. To identify alternatives, VA and the Navy rigorously explored and objectively considered other potentially reasonable alternatives to the Proposed Action. The Proposed Action is the transfer of excess Federal real property from the Navy to VA and VA's subsequent construction and operation of a VHA OPC, VBA Outreach Office, NCA Cemetery, and associated infrastructure. The Navy would be responsible for transfer of the excess Federal real property, and VA would be responsible for the construction and operation of the proposed facilities.

As part of the alternatives planning process, a range of preliminary site alternatives were identified and then screened against the Proposed Action's purpose and need as well as VA siting criteria. Through this process, some alternatives were eliminated from further consideration and the remaining alternatives were studied in detail as part of this NEPA review.

The planning process for establishing a new VA facility to serve Bay Area Veterans began in 2004. At the start of the planning process, various alternative locations in the Bay Area were considered. The alternatives ranged from consideration of separate sites for each of the VA Administrations (i.e., VHA, VBA, and NCA) to a single site large enough to fit all of the project components (i.e., One VA goal). For each of the three VA Administrations, alternative site locations were evaluated against specific siting criteria that were developed and used to screen and reduce the number of alternatives considered. Geographic location, site size, and land use compatibility were the primary screening factors, along with the ability of each alternative to meet the Proposed Action's purpose and need. In addition, the planning process considered the One VA goal, which advocates consolidating services wherever possible to ensure that the most centralized, coordinated, and efficient care and services are provided to Veterans in a local area. Table 2-1 lists VA's siting criteria.

There are no alternatives to the Navy's Proposed Action, aside from retention of the property by the U.S. government in caretaker status (i.e., No Action Alternative). To comply with the Defense Base Realignment and Closure Act of 1990, as amended, the Navy is required to transfer excess property at the former NAS Alameda.

2.2 SITE ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT ELIMINATED FROM DETAILED ANALYSIS

Several possible site locations throughout the Bay Area were reviewed against the siting criteria and the Proposed Action's purpose and need. This section identifies the preliminary site alternatives that were eliminated from further consideration and not carried forward for detailed analysis in this EA. There were no potential sites that were eliminated from further consideration with respect to VBA services.

Table 2-1: Siting Criteria for VA Facilities

	VHA Outpatient Clinic	NCA National Cemetery	VBA Outreach Office
Service Area (Catchment Area)	- The proposed VHA OPC must be located within 30 minutes of the primary Veteran service area where the majority of the local Veterans reside, in this case, the Bay Area.	Cemetery that would serve 90% of San Francisco Bay Area Veterans by being located within 75 miles of their residences.	Co-location with other VA facilities desirable.
Space/Acreage Requirements	- 158,000 gsf* - Located on 15 to 20 acres	80 acres	3,906 gsf
Other Considerations	Additional location considerations for the OPC include: - Proximity to local civilian hospitals is a general requirement in the technical review process for an OPC and is considered during site selection. - The OPC must not be located close to churches, schools, or other sensitive land uses. - The OPC must avoid locating under the flight path of airports because of aircraft noise/post-traumatic stress disorder concerns. - Ability of VHA to own the property rather than a long-term lease.	Additional location considerations for the NCA cemetery include: - Area with dense Veteran population. - Sufficient space for at least a 100-year inurnment projection within a 75-mile radius of the projected site. - Shape of property. - Accessibility. - Availability of water and utilities. - Compatible surrounding land uses. - Topography. - Aesthetics. - VA-owned property rather than leased property.	Co-location with other VA facilities desirable.

Notes: gsf = gross square feet; NCA = National Cemetery Administration; OPC = Outpatient Clinic; VA = Department of Veterans Affairs; VBA = Veterans Benefits Administration; VHA = Veterans Health Administration

* Based on VA space planning criteria in 2008, minimum square footage for the OPC, including the mental health/behavioral health facility, is 107,000 gsf.

2.2.1 VHA Outpatient Clinic Sites Considered but Eliminated

Early in the planning process, an internal VA Sierra Pacific Network 21 task force was formed to look at future placement of VHA medical facilities in Alameda County. Overall, a location in or near the City of Oakland was desired, because it could serve the Veteran population that resides in or near Oakland, some of whom use the existing Oakland VA facilities. A variety of sites were identified for a new OPC, and most of the sites considered were located within Alameda County. After careful consideration of all factors, including the Proposed Action’s purpose and need and siting criteria, the following sites were considered for an OPC, but were eliminated from detailed analysis.

The former Oakland Army Base (Oakland, Alameda County)

The former Oakland Army Base is a 425-acre cargo and distribution facility located on the Oakland waterfront, just south of the eastern terminus of the San Francisco–Oakland Bay Bridge and approximately 2 miles northwest of Oakland’s central business district. VA requested the former Oakland Army Base Clinic as a Fed-to-Fed transfer, so that it could provide permanent space for its mental health and substance abuse services. The 62nd Army Reserve was instead selected to receive the requested property under the BRAC Federal agency screening process.

Therefore, VA lost its opportunity for a Fed-to-Fed transfer at the Oakland Army Base site, and this option was eliminated from further consideration.

Originally, VA had a joint VA/DoD Sharing Agreement with the Army Reserve to operate a VA mental health clinic at no cost on the Oakland Army Base property. The VA had to explore other sites when this portion of the property was transferred to the Oakland Base Reuse Authority in 2003, and eventually it relocated this facility—now called the VA Oakland Behavioral Health Clinic—to its current location at 525 21st Street in Oakland.

The former Oak Knoll Naval Hospital Site (Oakland, Alameda County)

The site of the former Oak Knoll Naval Hospital site is approximately 183 acres and is located in Oakland north of Interstate-580, between the Keller Avenue and Golf Links Road exits. The hospital was decommissioned in 1996 and established as the Oak Knoll Redevelopment Project Area by the City of Oakland in 1998.

This site was considered as a possible location for the VA OPC, but it was determined that the OPC would not be compatible with the property's existing condition and proposed future residential and commercial uses. The older facility that once served medical personnel on the site was deemed too deteriorated to reuse as a VA OPC. In 2005, a private developer purchased 167 acres of the Oak Knoll Naval Hospital site from the U.S. Government.

Fairmont Hospital Site (San Leandro, Alameda County)

Fairmont Hospital, part of the Alameda County Medical Center, is located north of Interstate-580 and east of Fairmont Drive in the city of San Leandro. The Fairmont Hospital site was considered as a possible location for the proposed OPC because there was an opportunity to co-locate VA outpatient services with new outpatient facilities proposed at that location by Alameda County. However, VA determined that this site was not viable because funding limitations prevented Alameda County from pursuing its plans for the Fairmont Campus, and VA could not afford to purchase the land on their own for the proposed action. In addition, VA determined the location was too remote and distant from downtown Oakland which would make access difficult for much of Alameda County's VA user population.

Livermore VA Medical Center (Livermore, Alameda County)

The Livermore VA Medical Center was considered for the proposed OPC, but was eliminated because it is located approximately 40 miles from the main Veteran service area in Alameda County (downtown Oakland), which would make access difficult for much of Alameda County's VA user population.

The former Concord Naval Weapons Station (Concord, Contra Costa County)

The former Concord Naval Weapons Station was also reviewed for the proposed OPC, but was dismissed due to its location, approximately 30 miles from the main Veteran service area in Alameda County (downtown Oakland), which would make access difficult for much of Alameda County's VA user population.

The former Mare Island Naval Shipyard (Vallejo, Solano County)

The former Mare Island Naval Shipyard was considered for the proposed OPC, but was eliminated because it is located more than 25 miles away from the main Veteran service area in Alameda County (downtown Oakland), which would make access difficult for much of Alameda County's VA user population.

Privately Owned Properties (Alameda County)

In July 2008, Carpenter/Robbins Commercial Real Estate, Inc. completed a VA-commissioned study that identified privately owned properties that could accommodate the OPC and meet most of the siting criteria. Although these alternative sites would not meet VA's desire for a Fed-to-Fed land transfer, several sites were explored to provide a comparison of available land in the region. The study considered properties located within the geographical boundaries (northern Alameda County line, eastern Alameda County line, 98th Avenue in Oakland, and San Francisco Bay) that support the One VA goal. The study initially identified 11 sites large enough to accommodate the OPC. Nine of these sites were dismissed from further consideration, because their permitted/allowable use or ownership type was not compatible with the OPC use. The two sites that could potentially accommodate the OPC, both near the Oakland International Airport, were dismissed from further consideration, because they did not meet VA's desire for a Fed-to-Fed land transfer and the noise and vibration from aircraft operations could interfere with post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) patient treatment. In addition, the sites were not large enough to allow co-location of VA facilities. Therefore, all 11 privately owned sites were eliminated from detailed analysis.

2.2.2 National Cemetery Administration Cemetery Sites Considered but Eliminated

Early in the planning process, several locations were considered for independently siting a new NCA Cemetery. The Bay Area was identified by the NCA as an ideal location for a columbarium in accordance with the NCA's Urban Initiative and with VA's service area goals. Identifying an adequate amount of acreage for a national cemetery was a difficult task because of location and cost issues. Three VA medical center properties in the Bay Area were considered (VA Palo Alto Health Care System [Palo Alto Division and Menlo Park Division] and the San Francisco VA Medical Center). None of these sites had the acreage available to meet the needs of a new national cemetery site and were eliminated from detailed analysis.

2.3 SELECTION OF VA TRANSFER PARCEL AT FORMER NAS ALAMEDA (ALAMEDA COUNTY)

During the VA planning process, excess Federal property became available at the former NAS Alameda property. The available property included approximately 900 acres (525-upland and 375-submerged acres), that was originally intended to be transferred to the USFWS. This property became available when transfer negotiations between the Navy and USFWS reached an impasse. Subsequently, the Navy engaged in discussions with other Federal entities that had a long-term need to acquire lands to support their missions. VA expressed interest in a portion of this property, now referred to as the VA Transfer Parcel, and submitted a formal request for the property in 2006 through a Fed-to-Fed property transfer. The submerged lands considered for transfer in USFWS's prior property request are not included in the proposed Fed-to-Fed transfer to VA.

2.3.1 Selection of VA Transfer Parcel

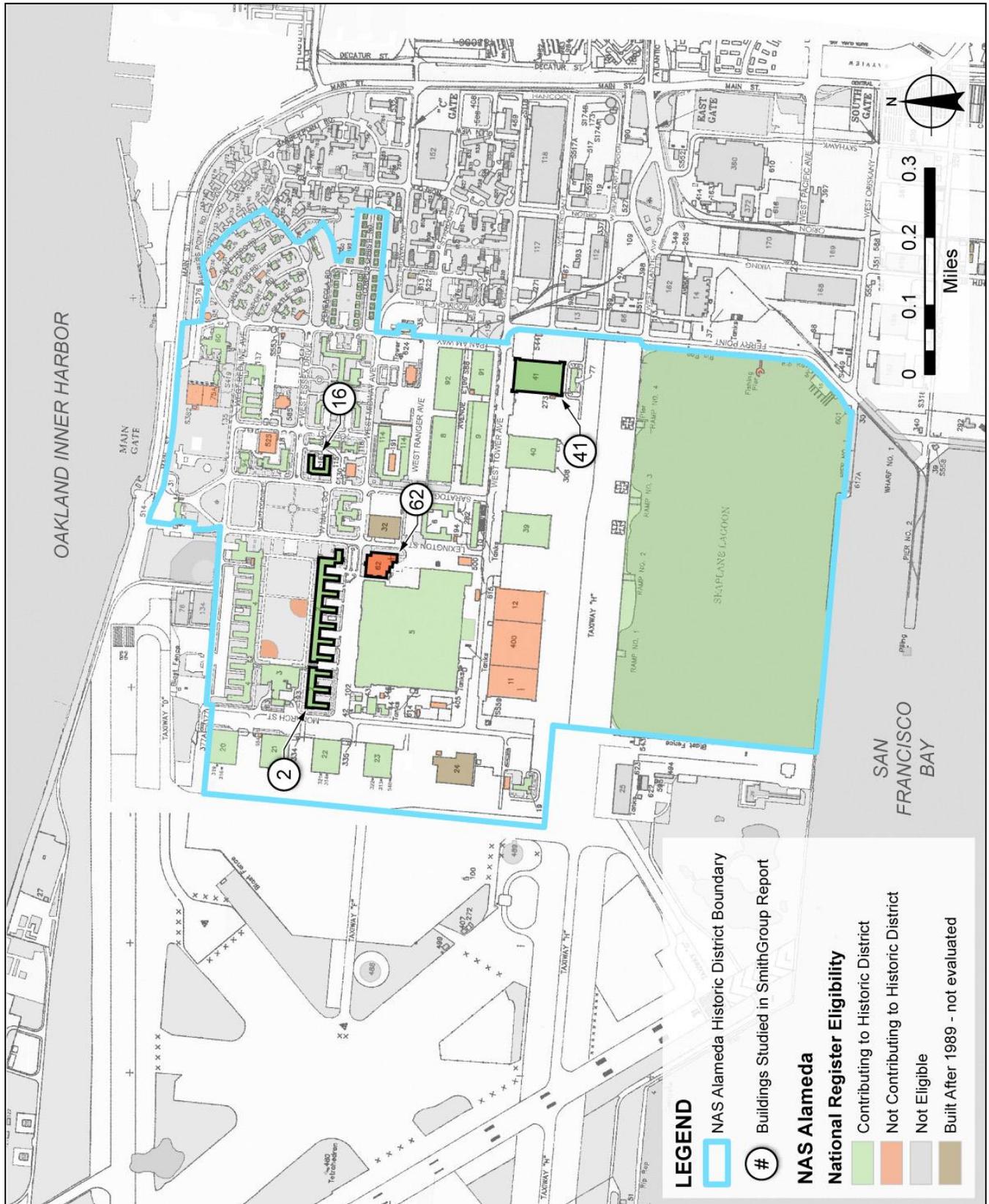
The VA Transfer Parcel has been identified by VA as the preferred location for its Proposed Action (i.e., construction and operation of a new OPC, VBA Outreach Office, and NCA Cemetery). The VA Transfer Parcel site best meets VA's purpose and need and siting criteria, including:

- The site is located within the desired VHA and NCA service areas, in this case Northern Alameda County and the Bay Area, respectively.
- The site is large enough to co-locate all components of the Proposed Action (i.e., OPC, VBA Outreach Office, and NCA Cemetery) at one site to meet the One VA goal, which advocates consolidating services wherever possible to ensure that the most centralized, coordinated, and efficient care and services are provided to Veterans in a local area.
- The site is not located in close proximity to sensitive land uses such as churches, schools, and aircraft flight paths.
- The site has sufficient space to meet future needs for NCA Cemetery internments (i.e., space to expand for at least 100 years).
- The Fed-to-Fed transfer would allow VA to own the property.
- The site is accessible to existing utility infrastructure and transportation networks.

After VA requested the upland acreage originally identified for transfer to the USFWS, VA began a more specific site planning process to determine the options for optimum site reuse. VA and the Navy carefully considered the existing environmental constraints and used them to guide the planning process, so that the project design could incorporate features that would minimize potential project impacts. Several meetings were also held with USFWS staff members, the Golden Gate Audubon Society, and other stakeholders to address concerns about potential impacts on the CLT colony. Consideration of these concerns led to VA's analysis of additional site locations at the former NAS Alameda that could reduce impacts to the CLT colony. Sections 2.3.2 and 2.3.3 describe the other NAS Alameda site locations and configurations that VA considered. At the conclusion of this site consideration process, VA ultimately identified two action alternatives to be carried forward for detailed analysis (see Section 2.4 below).

2.3.2 Other NAS Alameda Sites Considered but Eliminated

Once the VA Transfer Parcel was identified an analysis was conducted by VA to review locations and functional arrangements at the former NAS Alameda where existing buildings and grounds could be potentially rehabilitated and reused for an OPC. The existing buildings at the former NAS Alameda that had the greatest potential for reuse were assessed in an October 2008 report prepared by SmithGroup, VA's architectural/engineering contractor assigned to address building reuse issues (SmithGroup, 2008). For the reasons described below, the following buildings at former NAS Alameda were considered for the OPC but rejected. Figure 2-1 shows the locations of the existing buildings at the former NAS Alameda that were assessed.



Source: Data provided by Navy in 2011

Figure 2-1: Locations of Existing Buildings Considered but Eliminated at the Former NAS Alameda

NAS Alameda Building 2: Former Enlisted Barracks Building—The former Enlisted Barracks Building, located at the northwest corner of West Midway Avenue and Lexington Street (Second Street), is a two-story concrete structure that was constructed in 1944. The building contains approximately 228,900 gsf of space. Reusing this facility for the OPC was considered. The primary reason that the former Enlisted Barracks Building was eliminated as a viable alternative was the cost and complexity of reusing the building and bringing it up to current codes and standards, compared to the cost of constructing a new clinic on a vacant site. The existing building would not function in a manner that would meet the clinical and administrative functions required by an OPC. Furthermore, there is not enough space in the area to allow for an adjacent surface parking lot. Additionally, the building is located within the NAS Alameda Historic District and is identified as contributing to the historic district. Therefore, any alterations to the building would be subject to requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), including consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer under Section 106 of the NHPA, adding an additional level of complexity to its reuse.

NAS Alameda Building 16: Former Naval Clinic Building—The former Naval Clinic Building, located at the southeast corner of Third Street and West Essex Drive, is a concrete building constructed in 1941 that contains approximately 38,000 gsf of space on two floors, plus a partial third floor. Like Building 2, this building is located within the NAS Alameda Historic District and is identified as contributing to the historic district. Therefore, any alterations to the building would be subject to requirements of the NHPA, including consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer under Section 106 of the NHPA. To fit the program for the OPC at this location, additional buildings, some of them also historic, would have to be acquired and demolished so that VA facilities could be constructed to meet the space requirements. It was determined that retrofitting the existing facilities would be more expensive than constructing a new clinic on a vacant site. Parking requirements would also be difficult to meet because of the land requirements and added cost to the project. Finally, the existing building is not suitable for the types of clinical and administrative functions required by an OPC.

NAS Alameda Building 41: Former Hangar Building—Building 41 is one of five identical hangars located on the south side of West Tower Avenue (Avenue F). The building, constructed in 1945, is a single-story free-spanning structure with mezzanines at the north and south ends. The hangar contains approximately 118,000 gsf of space. There is also a two-story support and office area in the center of the structure, effectively dividing the hangar into two identical areas at the north and south. There has been some construction within the open hangar areas to provide additional office and support space. Like Buildings 2 and 16, this building is located within the NAS Alameda Historic District and is identified as contributing to the historic district; therefore, any alterations to the building would be subject to requirements of the NHPA, including consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer under Section 106 of the NHPA. It was determined that a hangar is not suitable for the types of clinical and administrative functions required for an OPC. Furthermore, the cost required to alter the structure to function as a clinic, along with the need to meet current codes and standards, would be greater than the cost of constructing a new OPC on a vacant site.

NAS Alameda Building 62: Former Dining Facility and Credit Union—The former Dining Facility and Credit Union, located at the southwest corner of Avenue C and Lexington Street, was originally constructed in 1942 and contains approximately 42,800 gsf of space on two floors. Although this building is located within the NAS Alameda Historic District, it is not identified as contributing to the historic district. The dining facility was designed as a single-floor concrete structure. The credit union was designed as a separate two-story concrete structure and was added at a later time. To accommodate the VA facilities, other buildings would need to be

demolished, and a new wing with approximately 64,000 gsf of space would need to be constructed. These alterations would be more costly than constructing a new clinic on a vacant site. Parking requirements would be challenging because of the limited space available. Finally, the existing building is not suitable for the types of clinical and administrative functions required by an OPC.

Based on the findings stated above, the assessment prepared by SmithGroup concluded that although these existing buildings at the former NAS Alameda are interesting structures both historically and architecturally, they would not adapt well for use as an OPC. Therefore, the rehabilitation of these existing buildings was dismissed from further consideration (SmithGroup, 2008).

NAS Alameda—East and South of Seaplane Lagoon

Late in VA's planning process, the Navy and VA received comments recommending the general area east and south of the Seaplane Lagoon as an alternative site location for the VA project. In 2011, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (LBNL) informed the City of Alameda it would not build a second campus at the former NAS Alameda. The location of the second campus for LBNL was proposed for approximately 45 acres southeast of the Seaplane Lagoon. This potential site has not been carried forward for consideration for the VA OPC for several reasons: (1) it is not large enough to site the proposed VA facilities together (as envisioned by the One VA goal); (2) the site is located entirely on property to be conveyed by the Navy to the City of Alameda via a no-cost economic development conveyance (EDC); and (3) the City of Alameda desires to locate a commercial tenant at this key waterfront location.

2.3.3 Other VA Transfer Parcel Alternatives Considered but Eliminated

The following VA Transfer Parcel development alternatives were presented to the public during this EAs 2008 Scoping Period (December 8, 2008 through January 20, 2009) (see Section 1.3 [NEPA Process and Public Involvement]). The purpose of the scoping period was to provide an opportunity for agencies and members of the public to comment on the potential environmental issues and concerns regarding the Proposed Action and to determine the scope of issues to be addressed in this EA. Based upon the public comments received during the scoping period, including concerns about increased traffic and the potential effect of the project on the California Least Tern, the following alternatives were eliminated.

“One VA” at Alameda Point Alternative

VA would acquire a 549-acre parcel and develop a 113-acre portion of the site along the northern portion of the parcel. The development would include a NCA Cemetery (53 acres), OPC (107,000 gsf), community hospital (250,000 gsf) with helipad, VA support/medical office building (100,000 gsf), nature center, and trail system. This alternative was eliminated due to public concerns regarding the scale of development (457,000 gsf of usable medical and office space), noise, traffic, and potential impacts to the CLT.

NCA Cemetery on Parcel and VHA Clinic at Other Alameda Point Site

VA would acquire a 549-acre parcel and develop a NCA cemetery within the northwest portion of the VA Transfer Parcel. In addition, an OPC would be constructed within the larger former NAS Alameda property (i.e., Alameda Point). This alternative was eliminated from detailed study because it would require VA to lease or

purchase property within Alameda Point. In addition, the proposed alternative would not meet the One VA goal to consolidate services in one location. Further, the reuse of an existing building was determined not feasible due to the cost and complexity of reusing the building and bringing it up to current codes and standards. Also, the existing buildings would not function in a manner that would meet the clinical and administrative functions required by an OPC. Additionally, the buildings considered were located within the NAS Alameda Historic District and is identified as contributing to the historic district. Therefore, any alterations to the building would be subject to requirements of the NHPA, including consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer under Section 106 of the NHPA, adding an additional level of complexity to its reuse.

NCA Cemetery on Parcel and VHA Clinic in Oakland

VA would acquire a 549-acre parcel and develop a NCA cemetery within the northwest portion of the VA Transfer Parcel. In addition, a VHA clinic would be established in the City of Oakland. This alternative was eliminated from detailed study because it would require VA to lease or purchase property within the City of Oakland (for the VHA clinic). In addition, the proposed alternative would not meet the One VA goal to consolidate services in one location.

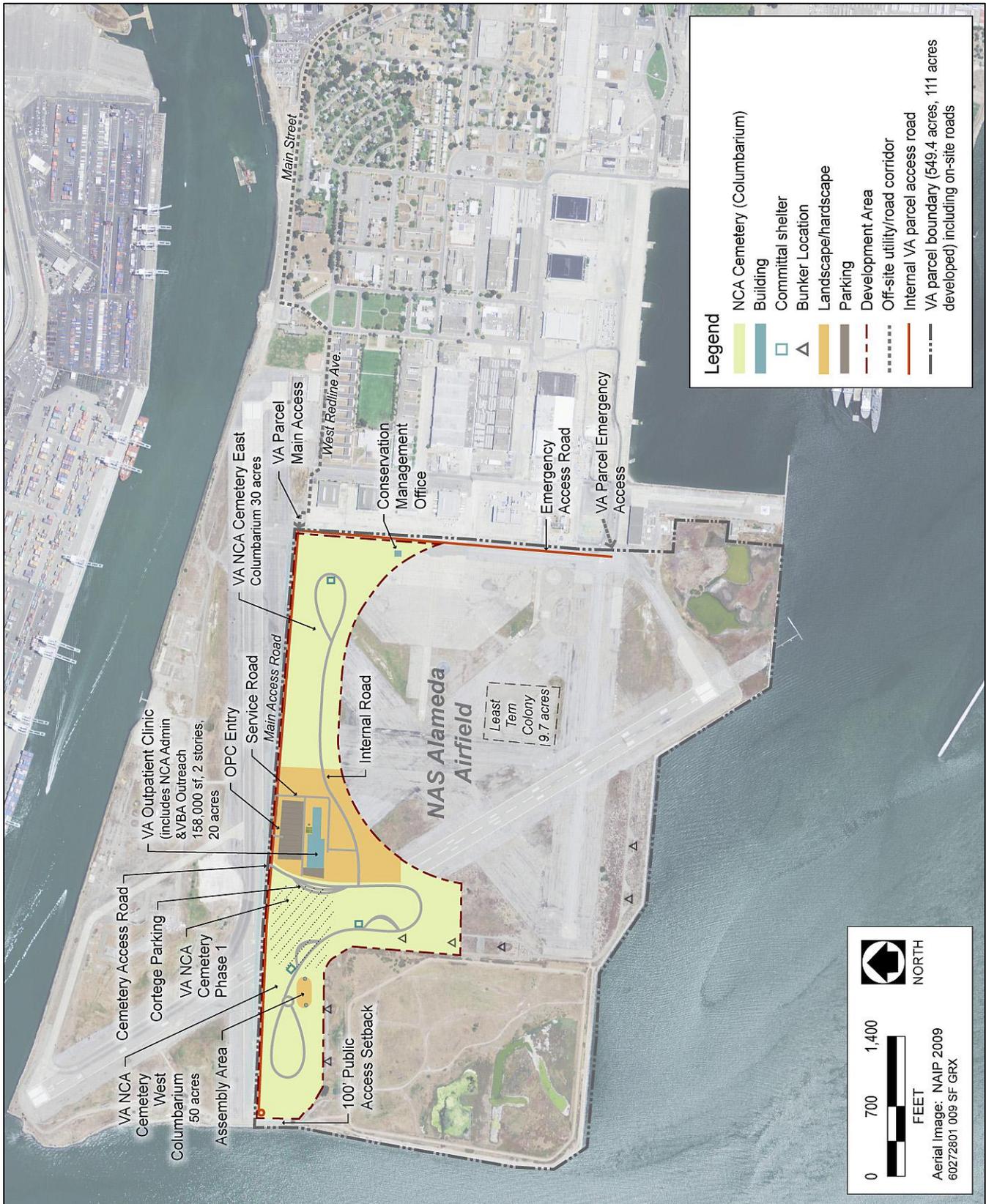
2.4 DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES

Two action alternatives and a No Action Alternative were retained for detailed analysis in this EA. Each action alternative includes the transfer of excess Federal property from the Navy to VA and VA's subsequent construction and operation of an OPC, VBA Outreach Office, NCA National Cemetery, and associated infrastructure. Alternative 2 has been identified as the Preferred Alternative. The alternatives examined in this EA are described in detail below.

2.4.1 Alternative 1

Under Alternative 1, the Navy would transfer approximately 549 acres of excess Federal real property at the former NAS Alameda to VA via a Fed-to-Fed transfer; this area is referred to as the VA Transfer Parcel. Following the Fed-to-Fed transfer, VA would construct and operate an VHA OPC, VBA Outreach Office, NCA Cemetery, Conservation Management Office, and associated infrastructure on approximately 111 acres of the total VA Transfer Parcel; this area is referred to as the VA Development Area. VA would also construct an off-site utility/road corridor on approximately 6 acres of land to the east of the VA Transfer Parcel. The project components of Alternative 1 are summarized in Table 2-2 and illustrated in Figure 2-2. Additional information on the various project components are detailed below.

The remaining 438 acres of the VA Transfer Parcel, including the existing CLT colony, would remain undeveloped. The undeveloped portion of the VA Transfer Parcel would be managed for the long-term persistence and sustainability of the CLT colony and access would be restricted during the CLT breeding/nesting season (estimated to be from April 1 through August 15). Under Alternative 1, the VA Development Area would be 1,430 feet away from the CLT colony.



Source: Data compiled by AECOM in 2012

Figure 2-2:

Alternative 1 Site Plan

Table 2-2: VA Development Area under Alternative 1

Project Component	Gross Square Feet	Acres
Outpatient Clinic	158,000	20
VHA Ambulatory Care Services	50,000	
VHA Specialty Services	25,000	
VHA Mental Health Services	25,000	
VHA Pharmacy/Lab/Radiology Services	18,500	
VHA Clinic Management/Education Space	4,000	
VHA Lobby	1,500	
Emergency Management Services/Medical Administration	12,500	
Canteen	7,500	
Police Services	1,500	
VBA Outreach Offices	5,000	
Courtyard	NA	
Surface Parking (632 spaces)	NA	
NCA Offices and Public Information Center	7,500	
NCA Cemetery	2,700	80
West Cemetery Committal Service Shelters	1,800	50
East Cemetery Committal Service Shelters	900	30
Conservation Management Office (acreage is part of gross square footage for East Cemetery Committal Service Shelters)	2,500	–
On-site Utility/Road Infrastructure/Bicycle Lane/Pedestrian Pathway	NA	11
Off-site Utility/Road Corridor	NA	6
TOTAL	163,200	111 on-site and 6 off-site

Notes: NA = not applicable; NCA = National Cemetery Administration; VA = Department of Veterans Affairs;

VBA = Veterans Benefits Administration; VHA = Veterans Health Administration

Source: Data compiled by AECOM in 2012

VHA Outpatient Clinic

VA would construct a 158,000 gsf, two-story building located within a 20-acre portion of the VA Development Area. The OPC would include behavioral health services, a pharmacy, a radiology department, laboratories, outpatient surgery, urgent care, specialty clinics, and support functions including a canteen, clinic management and education center, administrative space, housekeeping, storage, and employee lockers and lounges. A surface parking area with 632 vehicle spaces would be provided adjacent to the OPC building, and would include a shuttle drop-off/pick-up area for Veterans and VA staff members. Table 2-2 summarizes and Figure 2-2 illustrates the major development components of Alternative 1.

The OPC building would be two stories and most of the building would be less than 40 feet in height. Portions of the building may be up to 54 feet in height to allow for mechanical equipment and a roof element at the building entrance; however, no more than 25% of the total roof area would exceed 40 feet in height. Materials used for the OPC building may include concrete masonry units, glass fiber reinforced concrete, metal panels, precast concrete, and cement plaster. The OPC building would be designed to meet VA's sustainability goals and to achieve Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED®) Silver certification.

The OPC would be in operation from 8 A.M. to 5 P.M., Monday through Friday. In addition, some outpatient services, including behavioral health services, would be offered on Saturday and Sunday from 8 A.M. to 12 noon. No emergency care or inpatient care (overnight stays) would be provided at the OPC. Based on data from other OPCs in the region, it is estimated that approximately 540 Veterans would be seen at the OPC each weekday and approximately 70 Veterans would be seen on each Saturday and Sunday. The normal staffing level during weekdays is anticipated to be approximately 250 employees (both full-time and part-time staff). The staffing level on the weekend is anticipated to be approximately 40 employees.

VBA Outreach Office

A VBA Outreach Office would be located in the OPC building and would provide on-site benefit services to Veterans and their dependents. It is anticipated that up to four VBA staff members would work at this office on a daily basis.

NCA National Cemetery

An 80-acre NCA Cemetery would be developed within the VA Development Area; 50 acres would be located to the west of the OPC and 30 acres to the east of the OPC (see Figure 2-2). The cemetery would only be for cremated remains (columbaria) and would include several wall-like structures (columbarium walls) with niches to house cinerary urns containing cremated remains. The columbarium walls would have a maximum height of 10 feet. Committal service shelters for inurnment or memorial services would also be provided. These pavilion-like structures are typically about 25 feet by 36 feet in size and approximately 25 feet in height; they provide seating for approximately 10–20 people and standing room for others attending the service. Up to three committal service shelters would be provided at the cemetery. Special holiday memorial services, such as those held on Memorial Day and Veterans Day, would be held within an assembly area. Other features of the assembly area include a memorial walkway, a flagpole, and a carillon (bell tower) that plays bells or tones.

A public information center for guests visiting the cemetery would be located in the OPC building (see above) and would consist of a reception area, restrooms, and offices. A staging area for funeral procession vehicles (Cortege Assembly Area) is proposed adjacent to the west side of the OPC building. This area would consist of three lanes for vehicles (up to 30 per service) to line up before proceeding to the committal service shelter. Additional parking would be provided adjacent to each committal service shelter to accommodate the funeral cortege.

Other features of the NCA National Cemetery would include a maintenance garage located on the north side of the OPC building near the service road, fencing along the perimeter of the cemetery areas, signage, landscaping, an irrigation system, benches, trash receptacles, and flower containers for floral offerings.

The cemetery would be open daily from sunrise to sunset, with possible expanded hours in the evening (until 8 P.M.) on Memorial Day and Veterans Day. On average, it is estimated that up to six memorial or inurnment services would take place each day, with attendance at these services typically ranging from 5 to 30 people. As part of military tradition, a military honors salute may be performed during inurnment ceremonies and special memorial services. The military honors salute is a ceremonial act performed at military funerals as part of the drill and ceremony of the Honor Guard, in which a rifle party fires blank cartridges in three volleys. The military honors salute would take place only at the proposed committal service shelters, all three of which would be more than 1,460 feet from the CLT colony. The rifle party would direct firing away from the CLT colony, and solid structures such as committal service shelters or columbarium walls would shield the firing locations from the colony. In addition, landscape berms may be created within the cemetery. These berms would be either 2,133 feet away from the CLT colony and up to 12 feet in height or within 2,133 feet of the colony and not exceeding 6 feet in height.

Conservation Management Office

VA would construct a Conservation Management Office for the management of the existing CLT colony. The Conservation Management Office would operate daily from sunrise to sunset, with possible expanded hours during CLT breeding/nesting season if circumstances require monitoring or management activities beyond the normal hours of operation. The Conservation Management Office may include other uses, such as an interpretive center that supports volunteer and public education programs. This building would be located east of the OPC building and would accommodate VA staff members and contracted staff/volunteers involved with management of the CLT colony. The building would be a one-story structure with a maximum height of 25 feet and would occupy approximately 2,500 gsf of space. A small parking area, consisting of 8 to 10 parking spaces, would be located adjacent to this office.

Existing Bunkers

Seven bunkers are located within the VA Transfer Parcel. VA would repurpose three of the bunkers, two for storage of emergency medical supplies and one for storage of emergency management supplies and equipment. The remaining four bunkers located within the VA Development Area would be left in place and unused. The locations of the seven bunkers are identified in Figure 2-2.

Emergency Preparedness Training

Emergency preparedness training exercises may be held at the VA Development Area about every 14 months. Activities associated with these training exercises are primarily standard emergency management exercises such as tabletop (planning) activities and building evacuation and assembly drills. These activities would be conducted inside the Medical Clinic or outside in the immediate vicinity of the Medical Clinic.

In addition, operations-based exercises could potentially be conducted at the project site. Operations-based exercises include drills such as accessing cache supplies or disaster preparedness activities related to regional emergencies (e.g., disaster, earthquake). Operations-based exercises would take place only on the VA Development Area and would be conducted outside of the CLT breeding/nesting season.

Access and Internal Circulation

Access to the VA Development Area would be provided via an on-site and off-site road network. Primary access would be provided by a main access road located along the northern portion of the VA Development Area. Branching from this main access road would be a network of on-site roads to provide access to the various components of Alternative 1 (e.g., OPC, NCA Cemetery). Parking would be available within surface parking lots adjacent to the OPC, within the National Cemetery area, and road-side along the on-site road network. Public access through the site would be achieved with a new two-lane main access road for vehicles that would include a painted bike lane on each side. In addition, a new pathway would allow for pedestrians to circulate separate from the road directly adjacent to and south of the main access road. The pathway would be constructed using existing paving to the extent possible and would be filled in with decomposed granite or asphalt to provide a continuous circulation route for pedestrians. The public access road and pathway would extend from the proposed OPC on the east toward the shoreline on the west, stopping before the 100-foot band under BCDC jurisdiction. At the terminus a turnaround for vehicles would be provided along with eight parking spaces, which would be created by restriping an existing paved area. These publically accessible zones would be separated from the entire VA Development Area by a security fence that would be controlled with gate access and patrolled by security personnel. Public entry/exit points would not be provided between the VA Development Area and the 100-foot setback area or other adjacent lands.

An off-site access utility/road corridor would be constructed to the east of the VA Development Area and would be located outside the VA Transfer Parcel on property located within Alameda Point. The off-site road would provide vehicle and bicycle access to the VA Development Area from the City of Alameda and is proposed to run along West Redline Avenue and connect to Main Street. No new vehicle roads would be developed outside the VA Development Area. On-site roads would be developed in accordance with VA design standards and specifications.

Secondary emergency access to the VA Development Area would be provided along the east boundary of the VA Transfer Parcel (Figure 2-2). This emergency access would be gated/access-controlled to prevent unauthorized vehicles from entering the undeveloped portion of the VA Transfer Parcel near the CLT colony.

As part of the proposed operation of the OPC, VA would provide shuttle service to the VA Development Area. A shuttle owned and operated by VA would transport Veterans and staff between the 12th Street Oakland City Center Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) station and the VA Development Area. The shuttle would operate seven days a week with 60-minute headways and would have a capacity of up to 24 passengers.

Utility Infrastructure

Site utilities, potable water, and storm drains for the VA Development Area would be constructed within the off-site road/utility corridor along West Redline Avenue and Main Street, and would tie into the existing City of Alameda infrastructure lines within the proposed off-site utility/road corridor (see above), east of the VA Transfer Parcel. Utility infrastructure would also be constructed within the VA Development Area to support proposed development.

Landscaping

Landscape planting in the VA Development Area would prioritize native shrub and herbaceous species over nonnative species, and none of the species would be invasive. Landscaped areas would consist primarily of drought-tolerant plant species and open hardscape areas. A limited amount of turf area may be provided in areas such as primary entrances and cemetery assembly areas and other prominent areas. Landscape vegetation within the line of sight of the existing CLT colony would be less than 4 feet in height. In areas outside of the colony's line of sight, trees would be a maximum of 20 feet in height and shrubs would be a maximum of 6 feet in height. On berms, vegetation would be limited to native grasses and shrubs with a maximum height of 3 feet.

Construction

Construction under Alternative 1 would take approximately 18 months to complete and would include development of the OPC and associated parking on 20 acres; access road and utilities infrastructure on 11 acres; the Conservation Management Office; and the first phase of the cemetery development to include 25,000 columbarium niches and support facilities, including two committal service shelters, internal roads, assembly area, and landscaping on an estimated 20 acres of the 80-acre cemetery area. The remainder of the cemetery area would remain undeveloped until there is a need for additional columbarium niches. VA typically phases cemetery development based on the demand expected during a 10-year period; VA estimates that approximately 25,000 columbarium niches (on approximately 6 acres) would be developed approximately every 10 years to meet the burial needs of Bay Area Veterans. Based on this phasing schedule, the final phase of the cemetery would be constructed around the year 2116.

In order to address seismically induced ground shaking and associated ground failure at the VA Development Area, 800 stone columns, 3.5 feet in diameter, to a depth of 40 feet below ground surface (bgs) would be installed along the main access road located along the northern portion of the VA Development Area. The stone columns would be installed using a direct push methodology where a probe is "pushed" into the ground using vibration techniques and then the resulting hole is filled with crushed stone. The columns then would work as vertical drainage to prevent the buildup of excess pressure.

It is anticipated that approximately 444,000 cubic yards of fill material would be needed to prepare for construction, which would include the OPC area, the Conservation Management Office, the first phase of cemetery development (approximately 20 acres), and on-site access roads. All fill material would be delivered via truck. The exact provider and source of the fill materials has not been determined; however, VA has determined that fill materials would come from a source less than 50 miles from the VA Development Area. It is anticipated that construction would take approximately 18 months—9 months of earthwork and installation of infrastructure and roadways, and another 9 months of building construction and installation of landscaping. Each subsequent cemetery phase (about every 10 years) would involve approximately 12 months of development, including earthwork and installation of columbarium structures and landscaping.

Dewatering and a geotextile layer may be required for base stability where excavations extend to near the shallow water table. Based on preliminary design recommendations, the OPC building would likely have a concrete pile foundation. Structural concrete mats could be a viable alternative to driven piles. The cemetery's columbarium would likely be constructed with concrete pile foundations. Grading and construction would require the use of

scrapers, dump trucks, bulldozers, a pile driver, concrete mixer trucks, pavers, pickup trucks, and mobile power generators. All construction staging areas would be located within the VA Development Area.

2.4.2 Alternative 2 (Preferred Alternative)

Under Alternative 2, the Navy would transfer excess Federal real property at the former NAS Alameda to VA via a Fed-to-Fed transfer; this area is referred to as the VA Transfer Parcel. The VA Transfer Parcel under Alternative 2 is approximately 624 acres and extends farther north than the transfer parcel identified in Alternative 1 (see Figure 2-3). Following property transfer, VA would construct and operate the identical development components as identified in Alternative 1, including an OPC, VBA Outreach Office, NCA Cemetery, Conservation Management Office, and associated infrastructure on approximately 112 acres of the total VA Transfer Parcel. VA would also construct an off-site utility/road corridor on approximately 6 acres of land to the east of the VA Transfer Parcel. Under Alternative 2, the VA Development Area is located farther north than under Alternative 1. The placement of the VA Development Area under Alternative 2 moves the proposed development farther away from the CLT colony. In addition, the OPC, NCA Cemetery, Conservation Management Office, and access road would have a different configuration than under Alternative 1. The project components of Alternative 1 are summarized in Table 2-3 and illustrated in Figure 2-3. Additional information on the various project components are detailed below.

Development of Alternative 2

Alternative 2 was developed as a direct response to concerns raised by the USFWS after VA and the Navy initiated formal consultation under the Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) for the Proposed Action. USFWS's concerns focused on the potential impacts of the Proposed Action on the CLT resulting from the construction and operation of Alternative 1 (see above). In response to these concerns, VA and the Navy coordinated with USFWS and other stakeholders, including East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) and City of Alameda to develop Alternative 2, which moved the VA Development Area farther north – 1,766 feet away from the CLT colony.

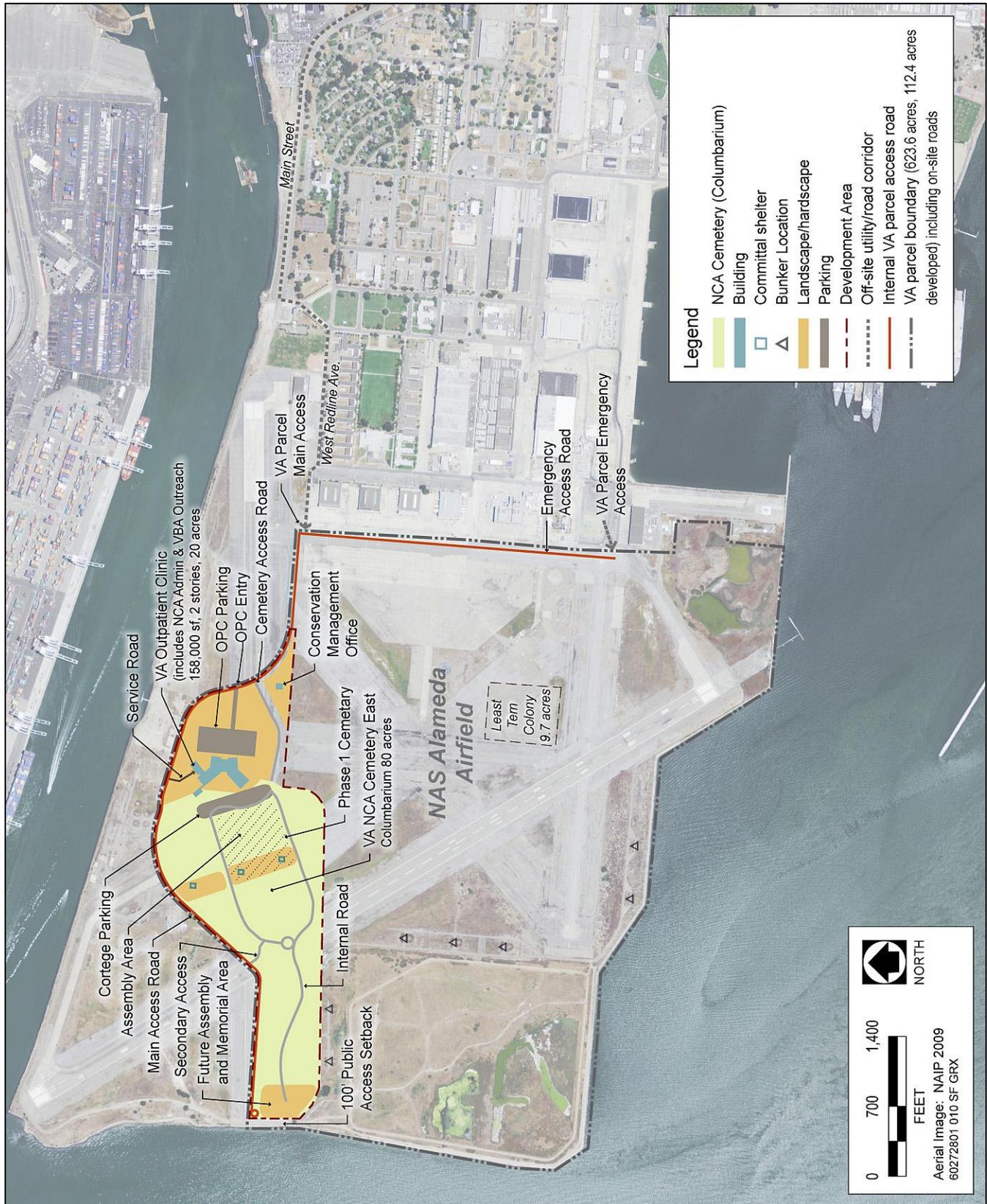
More information on the Navy and VA's formal ESA consultation with USFWS, including a description of the Biological Assessment (BA) submitted for Alternative 1 and USFWS's Biological Opinion (BO) received for Alternative 2 is included in Section 3.1 (Biological Resources).

VHA Outpatient Clinic

The OPC building would be the same size (e.g., 158,000 gsf, two stories) and would offer the same services, staffing levels, and hours of operation as under Alternative 1. However, the OPC building would have a different site layout/configuration under Alternative 2 (see Figure 2-3). The OPC would include an adjacent surface parking area (632 spaces) and would include a shuttle drop-off/pick-up area for Veterans and VA staff members.

VBA Outreach Office

As with Alternative 1, a VBA Outreach Office would be located in the OPC building and would provide on-site benefit services to Veterans and their dependents. The size and services provided at the VBA Outreach Office would be identical to those described under Alternative 1.



Source: Data compiled by AECOM in 2012

Figure 2-3:

Alternative 2 Site Plan

Table 2-3: VA Development Area under Alternative 2 (Preferred Alternative)

Project Component	Gross Square Feet	Acres
Outpatient Clinic Building	158,000	20
VHA Ambulatory Care Services	50,000	
VHA Specialty Services	25,000	
VHA Mental Health Services	25,000	
VHA Pharmacy/Lab/Radiology Services	18,500	
VHA Clinic Management/Education Space	4,000	
VHA Lobby	1,500	
Emergency Management Services/Medical Administration	12,500	
Canteen	7,500	
Police Services	1,500	
VBA Outreach Offices	5,000	
Courtyard	NA	
Surface Parking (632 spaces)	NA	
NCA Offices and Public Information Center	7,500	
NCA Cemetery (Committal Service Shelters)	2,700	80
Conservation Management Office	2,500	2
On-site Utility/Road Infrastructure/Bicycle Lane/ Pedestrian Pathway	NA	10
Off-site Utility/Road Corridor	NA	6
<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>163,200</i>	<i>112 on-site and 6 off-site</i>

Notes: NA = not applicable; NCA = National Cemetery Administration; VA = U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs;
VBA = Veterans Benefits Administration; VHA = Veterans Health Administration
Source: Data compiled by AECOM in 2012

NCA National Cemetery

The NCA Cemetery would occupy one contiguous 80-acre area west of the OPC building and would have a different configuration and layout than under Alternative 1 (see Figure 2-3). Cemetery services and facilities (e.g., committal service shelters, walkways, carillon, public information center) would be the same as described for Alternative 1.

Conservation Management Office

Under Alternative 2, the location of the Conservation Management Office would be located farther west than under Alternative 1 (see Figure 2-3). A small parking area, consisting of eight to 10 parking spaces, would be located adjacent to the office. The purpose for and operations within the office would be identical to those described in Alternative 1.

Existing Bunkers

Identical to Alternative 1, VA would repurpose three of the seven bunkers located within the VA Transfer Parcel, two for storage of emergency medical supplies and one for storage of emergency management supplies and equipment. The remaining four bunkers would be left in place and unused.

Emergency Preparedness Training

Identical to Alternative 1, emergency preparedness training exercises may be held at the VA Development Area about every 14 months. Such exercises would take place solely on the VA Development Area and would be conducted outside of the CLT breeding/nesting season.

Access and Internal Circulation

Under Alternative 2, primary and emergency access to the VA Development Area and proposed site shuttle services would be identical to those described in Alternative 1, including the construction of an off-site utility/road corridor to (see Figure 2-3). However, the network of on-site access roads and a pedestrian pathway would be in a different configuration than under Alternative 1.

Utility Infrastructure

Site utilities, potable water, and storm drains for the VA Development Area would be similar to the system described under Alternative 1 and would include the same off-site utility/road corridor.

Landscaping

Landscaping, including site restrictions, under Alternative 2 would be identical to those described in Alternative 1.

Construction

Grading and construction activities, phasing, and equipment for Alternative 2 would be the same as described for Alternative 1.

2.4.3 No Action Alternative

Under this alternative, the Fed-to-Fed transfer would not take place, and no VA facilities would be constructed on the site. Under the No Action Alternative, the property would be retained by the Navy in caretaker status until another action was taken on the property. No construction or redevelopment of the property would take place. On-site activities would be limited to maintenance, cleanup, and other actions associated with the Navy's caretaker status of the site. The Navy would continue its environmental cleanup under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA).

The VHA and VBA services would remain at the current locations, or because leasing arrangements would expire for some facilities, they would be relocated to other locations. For the NCA Cemetery, Bay Area Veterans would

use the San Joaquin National Cemetery in Santa Nella, California (approximately 100 miles away), the Sacramento Valley National Cemetery (65 miles away), or a private cemetery.

The No Action Alternative is evaluated in detail in this EA as prescribed by CEQ regulations and provides a baseline for analysis of the action alternatives.

2.5 REFERENCES

SmithGroup. 2008. *Study of Existing Buildings at Alameda Point for Possible VA Outpatient Clinic*. October 13.