



**Department of
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News Release

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VA Secretary to Keep Manhattan, Brooklyn Facilities *Nicholson Pledges Modernization at St. Albans in Queens*

WASHINGTON -- Veterans in the New York City area will enjoy improved health care with a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) commitment to retain existing medical centers in both Manhattan and Brooklyn while modernizing facilities at St. Albans in Queens, the Honorable R. James Nicholson, Secretary of Veterans Affairs, announced during a visit to New York City today.

“VA is committed to continuing world-class medical care that is convenient and accessible for New York City veterans,” Nicholson said. “VA will provide veterans with the care they need in the locations that make sense.”

Nicholson made the announcement on Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s weekly radio show.

Underlying today’s decision about VA’s Manhattan and Brooklyn facilities was Nicholson’s determination to maintain access to care for veterans, as well as close ties to the medical schools of both New York University and the State University of New York.

“VA is able to provide top-notch health care for veterans thanks, in part, to the cooperation of our SUNY and NYU affiliates,” Nicholson added. “VA looks forward to continuing our strong working relationships with those partners.”

VA’s Manhattan, Brooklyn and St. Albans campuses are part of VA’s New York Harbor Health Care System, an integrated health care system in which facilities complement each other to provide services to veterans. These facilities offer a wide range of inpatient and outpatient services, including acute medicine, surgery and mental health, nursing homes and domiciliaries.

Today’s announcement ends a detailed, two-year examination of the possibility of consolidating the Manhattan and Brooklyn facilities.

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At St. Albans in Queens, Nicholson said VA would replace existing facilities on the 50-year-old site with a state-of-the-art nursing home, outpatient clinics and domiciliary consolidated on the north end of the campus as part of the ongoing review of the facility.

“With new state-of-the-art facilities in St. Albans, New York veterans will have world-class medical care well into the 21st century,” said Nicholson.

The Secretary also accepted recommendations from a local advisory panel to maintain access to the 55-acre St. Albans campus via Linden Boulevard.

The Secretary pledged that as VA now prepares its development plans for St. Albans through its normal planning process, it will be sensitive to the surrounding community’s concerns, especially regarding the height of buildings and the potential for keeping the current auditorium and chapel.

Additional meetings of the local advisory panel for St. Albans will be scheduled to provide VA with recommendations for the completion of the modernization and reuse plan for portions of the campus.

The St. Albans project will be integrated into the Secretary's nationwide capital plan so that a timetable and budget can be established, followed by congressional consideration for authorization and funding.

“I want to personally thank our local advisory panels for the Manhattan/Brooklyn study and the St. Albans study, which have guided us in these decisions, along with many others, including the New York congressional delegation, veterans groups, city and state leaders, other stakeholders and VA employees,” Nicholson said.

Today's announcements were made as a result of a study that began in 2004 to upgrade VA’s health care facilities across the country.

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