Eucalyptus threaten the growth of native plants. Nevertheless, some nesting, perching, and dwelling places are offered for animals, along with a limited amount of forage and protection. Burrows confirm reports of mammals like pocket gophers, ground squirrels, coyotes, and raccoons.

Of the 244 species of birds historically found in the Santa Monica Mountain region, owls, mourning doves, band-tailed pigeons, bushtit, swifts, hummingbirds, swallows, jays, wrens, thrashers, blackbirds, finches, sparrows, hawks, and kestrels have been seen on the grounds of the VA. There have also been reports of sighting others such as the Spotted Dove, Townsend's Warbler and Hooded Oriole.

Instead of the rich variety of snakes and amphibians that would be expected in a pristine area connected by wildlife corridor to the mountains, a few examples of the western fence and alligator lizard have been seen. Except for butterflies and a few other groups, the insect population is poor too.

Outside the VA's northern section, plant materials and open space present a cultural rather than a natural landscape. Materials imported from other areas of the country and the world include magnificent palm groves, the rose garden, the Japanese garden, and the golf course. These and other plantings provide therapeutic settings essential to the health care mission of the VAMC.

Few, if any, early and reliable records detail how the human inhabitants fared when this landscape was yet untouched. Contemporary accounts of encounters between "outlanders" and Native Americans reveal more about the expectations and preconceptions of the newcomers than they provide hard facts about the way their predecessors lived. Again and again, the newly arrived express disappointment that they haven't met up with the bloodthirsty savages promised by popular pulp fiction. There's much reference to the flimsy construction and obviously temporary nature of shelter preferred by indigenous peoples. (With a longer history here, today we can appreciate the good sense of adapting in this matter to an unstable landscape subject to drought as well as flooding, mudslides and earthquakes.)

When Father Juan Crespi recorded the arrival of Gaspar de Portola in Sepulveda Canyon in August, 1769, he noticed evidence of campgrounds sporadically occupied by the Shoshoean Indians. And on Barrington Avenue between Texas and Ohio Avenues, we find the site of what was once the thriving self-contained village of the Tongva people, the Kuruvungna Springs, now in the care of the Gabrielino/Tongva Indians.

Beating out sixty other candidates for placement of a West Coast Branch of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers and Sailors required hard selling back in 1887. Nevada Senator John Percival Jones, Colonel Robert S. Baker, his wife Arcadia Bandini de Baker, and their L.A. Land and Water Company put up a fierce fight for a proposition that started out near the end of a

Congressional list. When managers of the future Home showed up in Los Angeles late in the year, they were entertained in great style at the Arcadia Hotel after an escorted tour of the highlighting the locale's salubrious landscape (within sight of sea and mountains) and access to convenient transportation. Admiring its "climate and hygiene," administrators were impressed enough to move the offered three hundred acres up to the number three spot.

To clinch the deal, Senator Jones telegraphed his promise of $100,000 to pay for improvements and a five-acre water source supplying 12,000 gallons a day. Such generosity was difficult to ignore. Votes were switched and the award was made. The new home for old soldiers would straddle two former Mexican land grants -- the Ranchos San Vicente y Santa Monica and San Jose de Buenos Ayres.

The decision was a valuable one for the recently founded nearby city of Santa Monica. Congress had committed to an annual budget of $259,000, not counting more than $66,000 that would come to soldier-residents as pensions. Great prosperity was anticipated. Veterans were no less enthusiastic. Unwilling to wait out construction, the first resident appeared. Private George Davis of New York, survivor of Civil War battle, set up his tent on the bare grounds. Before another year was out, he was joined by a thousand of his fellows. Marching down from Yountville in Northern California for 500 weary miles, a particularly gumptious group of one hundred men showed that the decades since Shiloh hadn't worn away their stubbornness or stamina.

Their attitudes rubbed off on the nearby community as it grew. While 1889 saw completion of Stanford White-designed buildings to house the eager veterans bivouacked in tents and makeshift structures, neighboring parcels on streets named after Northern states sold swiftly. Designating a street with the name of a Southern state was the kiss of death. Inside the grounds, only the Civil War men felt they'd earned the title "veterans." They dubbed Spanish-American war vets "bamboos" in recollection of battles fought in the Philippine jungles. World War I fighters received the name of "hero." The influence of these Civil War veterans can still be perceived today in the gingerbread structures that remain. Not until 1952 did the last of the gentlemen pass away. Douglas G. Story died at the age of 108 and was buried in the Los Angeles National Cemetery where, on May 11, 1889, Abner Prather of the 4th Indiana Infantry had been the first veteran laid to rest in a 20-acre tract consecrated and dedicated for the burial of residents. Later the tract was expanded to 114 acres, and veterans of every conflict from the Civil War to Vietnam rest here among their comrades-in-arms.

Among fourteen Medal of Honor recipients interred within the quiet grounds of the Los Angeles National Cemetery is Chris Carr, veterans of World War II. On Memorial Day his grave, like those of the other honorees, is marked with a special recognition flag of light blue with a white insignia of the medal he earned. In addition, every grave is decorated with a small U.S. flag.

Also on Memorial Day, an Avenue of Flags--50 interment flags donated by the next-of-kin--flies along Constitution Avenue within the cemetery. In memory of all our deceased veterans, these flags fly on Flag Day and Veterans Day as well.

But throughout the year, present-day veterans receive treatment at the 531-acre Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center. One of the largest and most complex health facility in the department, the VAMC West Los Angeles is committed to medical care, education of health care professionals and research. The medical center is a teaching institution affiliated with the University of California at Los Angeles Medical School and more than 22 other colleges, universities, and schools. The site of more than 17 medical, nursing, paramedical, allied health, and administrative programs, the VAMC West L.A. is one of the largest research institutions in the VA system.

Recognition of the important role paid by our branch of the VA has been marked by no fewer than three presidential visits. In 1901, President William B. McKinley addressed veterans of the Civil War and Spanish-American War on its grounds, promising them that *"the government for which you fought, to which you gave the best years of your lives...will see to it that in your declining years you shall not suffer."*

Appearances by President Taft in 1909 and by President Roosevelt in 1935 seemed to reaffirm that promise.

Responding to the changing needs of the veterans it serves, the West Los Angeles facility looks to the coming decades of a new century as an opportunity to continue to improve the care its precious patients receive.

On Memorial Day and every day, as neighbors we are proud to share these goals and feelings of appreciation for the men and women who have served our country so well.

Important Dates

1828 The Rancho San Vicente y Santa Monica is granted to Francesco Sepulveda, reaffirmed in 1938 and 1846.

1881 Ramona Sepulveda is claimant for 30,260 acres, patented on July 23.

1887 Congress creates a Pacific Branch of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers and Sailors.

Private George Davis of the 14th New York Cavalry is the first National Home patient.

1888 A thousand veterans camp out on the grounds of the new National Home, including a group of a hundred from the State Veterans Home in Yountville, California who had marched the 500 miles south to West Los Angeles.

1889 The National Home's new building houses 1,000 members.

First interment at the Los Angeles National Cemetery takes place when Abner Prather is buried here on May 22.

Dedication of the cemetery takes place on May 22.

1892 The U.S. government is spending $250,000 a year on the National Home.

1893 Staff quarters (building 33) and trolley station (building 66) are built.

1897 Engineering shops (building 44) built.

1900 The Barry Hospital opens and dozens of graceful structures in late Victorian style are built or moved here.

Trees are planted along the trolley lines.

The chapel is built.

1920 To provide for tuberculosis patients, additional buildings appear on the Brentwood grounds.

1927 The 2,400-bed James Wadsworth Hospital is completed.

1930 Fifteen barracks are constructed for homeless and jobless veterans enduring the Depression.

1935 Brentwood "sister" buildings are converted to use as neuropsychiatric facility for 2,000 men and women.

1955 Barry Hospital is demolished.

1963 More than half a million patients have been served by the West Los Angeles VAMC by this year.

1970 The WLA facility now cares for patients in three structures:
- V.A. Hospital Brentwood (neuropsychiatric)
- V.A. Hospital Wadsworth (medical/surgical)
- Extended Care (Domicilary)

1971 Earthquake demolishes the San Fernando V.A. Hospital; the Wadsworth VAMC and several Brentwood VAMC buildings declared seismically unsafe. Patients are moved, and the buildings razed.

1973 Construction begins on new 832-bed Wadsworth VA Medical Center at a cost of $1,000,000.

✓ The Los Angeles National Cemetery becomes part of the National Cemetery System when the Veterans Administration takes over responsibility for it. ✓

1981 The Brentwood and Wadsworth centers are joined administratively as the West Los Angeles VA Medical Center.

1986 Coalition of homeowners groups deters selling off of portions of the property by the White House Office of Management and Budget resulting in a temporary moratorium. ✓ mentioned in Holt Book: quote "Holt"

1988 Public Law 100-322 passed by Congress preventing the sale of the VA land to developers.

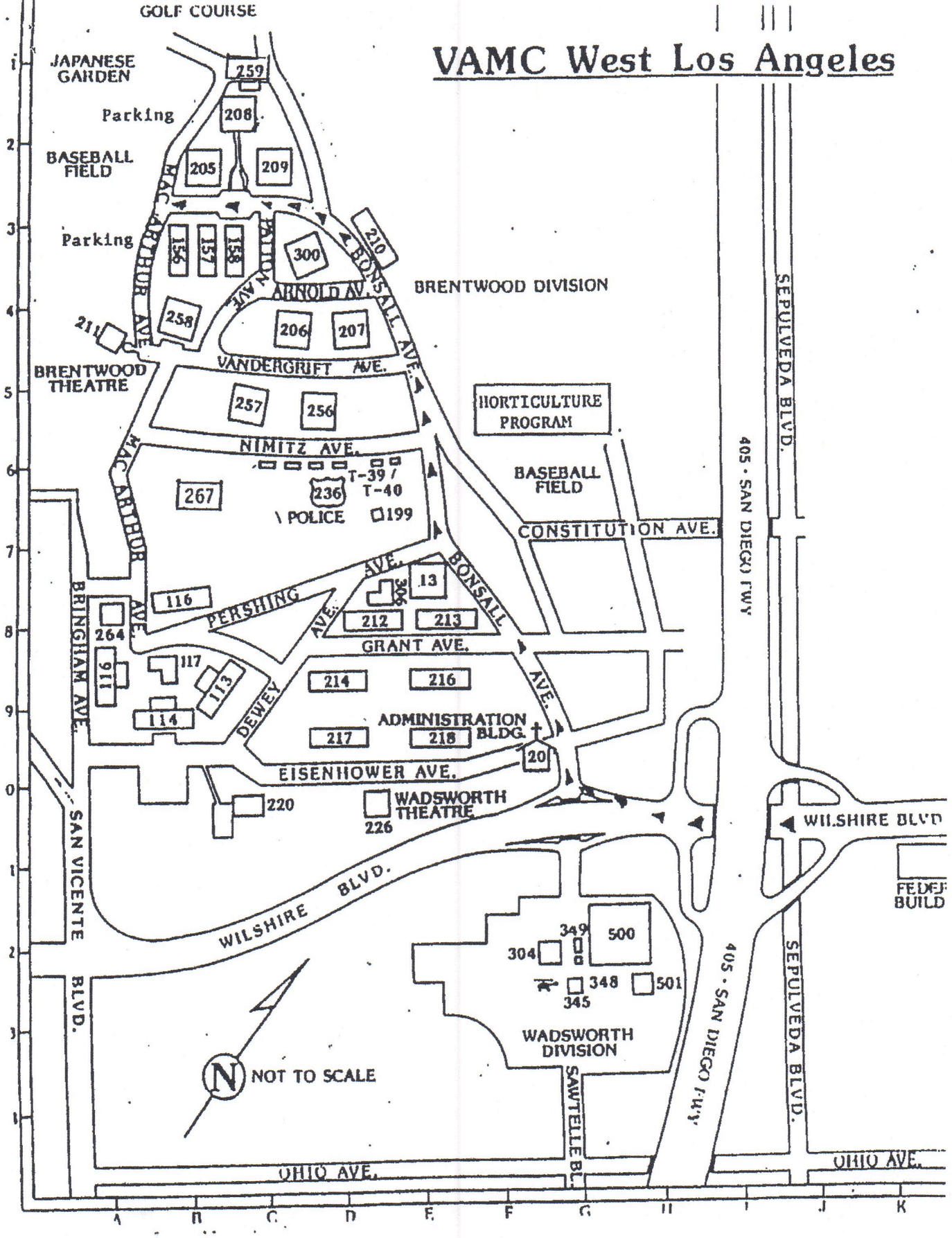
1991 Public Law 102-86 enacted by Congress prohibiting the threats of long-term commercial leasing of Veterans Affairs property.

1994 Earthquake damages many historic and fragile structures.

1995 Plans for a NFL Coliseum surfaces rousing community support. The California Congressional Delegation responds quickly to place a temporary moratorium on any form of development. Expansion of LA National Cemetery

July 1996 Legislation is introduced in Congress to transfer 45 acres of VA property as a Veterans Memorial Park in perpetuity for future cemetery expansion. Expansion vis-a-vis NFL legislation passed

VAMC West Los Angeles



Proposal for MacArthur Field at the West LA Campus

This proposal is being submitted on behalf of our two nonprofit soccer clubs, Westside Breakers and FC Los Angeles, who are currently maintaining and using MacArthur Field on the north side of the West Los Angeles VA campus. As the Master Planner and design professionals consider various proposals for restoring the West LA site, we believe our presence is consistent with the vision of a health campus that serves both the veterans and the surrounding communities.

Our two soccer clubs are nonprofit organizations that serve hundreds of boys and girls from all over Los Angeles. We provide full and partial scholarships to kids from underserved communities. All of our teams carry scholarship players, as high as 90% for some teams. A high percentage of our players use soccer as a vehicle to get into college.

Our clubs have served the community for over 15 years. This includes building and maintaining MacArthur Field as a beautiful green space for both our players and the veterans. Over the years, we have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars in redesigning, landscaping and maintaining the field. We have built new restroom facilities and installed portable lights to illuminate the field at night. Each spring we spend over $20,000 to restore and re-turf the worn spots on the field.

In addition to maintaining the field on our own dime, our clubs pay over $55,000 annually in rent to the VA.

We understand that the current proposal divides the VA campus into four zones. Zone 4 will be for "Green Space and Recreation" and includes MacArthur Field. This field is the open green space envisioned by the current proposal. Our clubs use the field only in the late afternoons/early evenings and over the weekend. Along the way, we have shared the field with the veteran community when needed for recreation or any other purpose.

Our clubs, players and families have volunteered our time and money to support veteran causes, such as our recent contributions to the annual 2K walk/run fundraiser. We have been active participants in the Master Plan discussions since the beginning. Our community consists of over 1,000 families who are enthusiastic about supporting the VA and helping to bring solutions to veterans' issues.

We propose that our clubs and the VA continue the current use arrangement for MacArthur Field, at least for the time being. The open field space is consistent with the draft plan for Zone 4. If eventually a consensus is reached that our clubs do not fit within the Master Plan, we would request a fair exit plan with ample advance notice. Working together like this will be the best way to build supportive relationships between the VA and the surrounding communities.

In the meantime, there is no good reason to remove our clubs from the field, at least at this preliminary stage of planning. Our continued presence will keep this space maintained in great condition and beautify the entire VA campus. MacArthur Field is the only open green space available on this site. We want to work with the VA to keep it that way.

Our clubs are also ready and able to assist in any facility upgrades that might be called for under the Master Plan. We are open to any proposals to enhance the field and facilities at MacArthur Field. This may include building a running/walking track around the field, installing permanent lights, making arrangements to open up the field during the day, and perhaps building an indoor gymnasium or club house.

We look forward to continuing our dialogue with the professionals assigned to this project, the VA and the veterans themselves. We share your vision of integrating the veteran community with the neighborhood surrounding the campus, in order to enhance the important recovery and rehabilitation goals of the VA.

September 3, 2015

Westside Breakers Soccer Club

FC Los Angeles

"Motorcycle-related fatalities is and continues to be a leading cause of death among service members unrelated to war." ~Armed Force Health Surveillance Center. December, 2013.

Dear Cynthia,

We are reaching out to you with the intention of being a part of the VA's new master land use plan for the West LA Campus. We understand many entities that do not provide direct services to Veterans are being asked to vacate by October. Our mission from the day we started training on the VA grounds has been Veteran-centric in nature. Since we began in 2005 as the original and only CHP-approved training facility in the 33rd CD, we have trained over 20,000 riders. *In that ten-year span, nearly one-third of our graduates have been Veterans.*

Need for Veteran Motorcycle Safety Courses: Motorcycle crashes are a leading cause of death among U.S. service members. In 2008, Marine motorcycle deaths topped their Iraq combat fatalities. A report published by the Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center (AFHSC) in December, 2013 indicates: "Motorcycle-related fatalities is and continues to be a leading cause of death among service members unrelated to war." This study tracked a 15-year surveillance period. The report recommends that greater efforts need to be made to encourage service members most at risk to appreciate their vulnerability and to modify their riding behaviors accordingly.

We serve our Veterans and our extended community with a high quality rider education program that recognizes and respects all learning abilities, in which safety to all participants is paramount. In addition to offering curricula recognized and required by the DOD for Veterans to ride on military bases, we offer free advanced riding courses for Veterans and provide a variety of direct and specific benefits to Vets including:

Discounts for the California Motorcyclist Safety Program Motorcyclist Training Courses (The DMV required license-waiver course): Veterans that come on standby are eligible to take the course for $100. (The CHP set the price statewide at $258).

Priority Enrollment for our Veterans: *Since 2009, the Department of Defense has required service members who intend to own a motorcycle to enroll and participate in motorcycle safety courses.* Since the closing of the LA Air Force Base, we have trained and licensed hundreds of Veterans mandated to take the courses we teach so they are able to ride on their military bases. WMA gives these Veterans priority enrollment to obtain their required training to fit their schedule as requested.

Free Quarterly Advanced Riding Classes for Veterans: Studies show that riders who continue to take courses and practice their riding skills reduce the occurrences of crashes and fatalities. WMA is committed to helping Veterans reverse the trend of surviving war and killing themselves on their motorcycles when they return to civilian life.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES

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LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90095-1405

October 5, 2015

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
United States Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Feinstein:

For nearly 70 years, the University of California, Los Angeles ("UCLA") and the Department of Veterans Affairs ("VA") have partnered to serve veterans at the West Los Angeles VA campus. Their medical collaborations have been rich and varied; and, together, UCLA and the VA have provided cutting-edge programs for veterans in fields as diverse as public health, social welfare, family resilience, and entrepreneurism. Today, opportunity exists for something even greater.

Inspired by Secretary McDonald's vision for a reinvigorated, veteran-centric campus and by its longstanding commitment to serving its veteran neighbors, UCLA has vowed to use its broad and deep medical and academic expertise to support the VA as it redesigns a West Los Angeles campus for the 21st century. Specifically, UCLA and the VA have agreed that expanding and strengthening their partnership will best serve the unique needs of veterans residing at and otherwise utilizing the West Los Angeles campus, and the following projects are under active consideration:

(1) *Veterans and Family Resource Center* – The Veterans and Family Resource Center would be a fully integrated, one-stop portal, through which veterans and their families could access specialized medical, public health, social work, legal, educational, employment, financial management, parenting skills, and family resilience programs and services. The Center, which would be jointly operated by UCLA and the VA, would be designed based on the work of Dr. Patricia Lester, Jane and Marc Nathanson Family Professor of Psychiatry at UCLA, the Director of the Nathanson Family Resilience Center, and a nationally recognized expert in family resilience and trauma.

(2) *Enhanced Specialty Medical Care for Veterans* – UCLA and the VA would collaborate to enhance specialty care available on the West Los Angeles campus by developing a concentration of programs and centers focused particularly on the problems of homeless and disadvantaged veterans. These programs and centers would focus on disabilities associated with trauma, including brain damage, post-traumatic stress, and addictive illnesses.