

A Future of Promise...

The American Veterans Heritage 2020 Strategic Plan

I. BACKGROUND

The American Veterans Heritage Center (AVHC) is an independent non-profit organization located on the Dayton VA Medical Center (DVAMC) campus. It was founded with the goal of honoring our veterans by preserving VA history and raising public and private awareness of the historical significance of the DVAMC facilities. The organization has targeted several structures for restoration and is working closely with local and national VA officials and other private organizations to bring these efforts to fruition. Additionally, the AVHC with its dedicated board members, volunteers and partners, seeks to develop a complementary education program for regional schools, an exciting series of museum and preservation facilities for the VA campus, and a revitalization project that could help to stimulate economic growth across the region. AVHC does not simply want to preserve history but to breathe life into it and to harness Dayton's rich military legacy as a springboard for revitalization, education and inspiration to all those who live, work or play in the Miami Valley region.

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

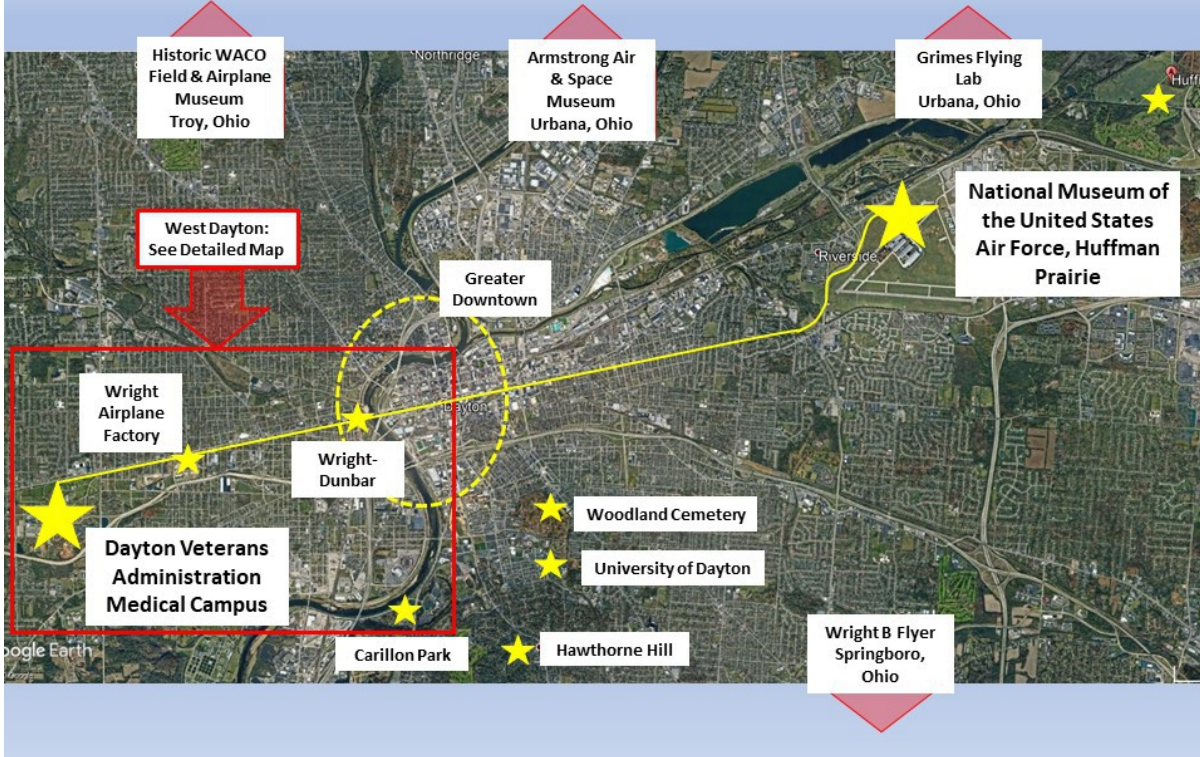
Long known as the “Gem City,” Dayton’s true unpolished gem is its ongoing contribution to American freedom through support for the U.S. military. The city, its residents, and its businesses/industry have played key roles in numerous national defense and national pride initiatives, including, but not limited to, Wright Patterson Air Force Base’s aeromedical contributions to the American space program, Monsanto’s involvement in the Manhattan Project, NCR’s World War II manufacturing efforts and role in breaking the Enigma Code, Dayton’s status as ‘birthplace of aviation’ and all its subsequent military and civilian aerospace contributions, and, of course, the role of the sprawling Dayton VA campus as a birthplace of veteran’s medical care in the United States. However, these historic achievements don’t even begin to scratch the surface of what the Miami Valley has done and been . . . and what it *can be* again.

On the surface, this strategic plan is a document that proposes the restoration of historic structures on the Dayton VA campus. Additionally, it ties in the creation of new public facilities/non-profit entities on the campus (within the aforementioned restored structures), as well as a campus-based educational initiative and a variety of on- and off-campus community outreach projects. Finally, it seeks to leverage the October, 2012, Department of the Interior designation of the campus as a National Historic Landmark. This strategic plan does not merely manifest the AVHC’s desire to work closely with VA officials to revitalize the Dayton campus; rather, it envisions a much larger cooperative effort that revitalizes the entire Miami Valley, as it spurs the destination dollars of heritage tourism, the economic stimulation of new or invigorated businesses and industry, and the creative energies of citizens with renewed hope and opportunity. To further institutionalize our collaboration with the Dayton VAMC and regional community, we have jointly developed an overarching Memorandum of Understanding between the AVHC and Dayton VA officials to guide our initiative planning, and confirmed that this AVHC Strategic Plan is consistent with and wholly supportive of the West Dayton Neighborhoods Vision Plan <https://www.daytonohio.gov/Document Center/View/6763/West-Dayton-Neighborhoods-Vision-Document>.

This plan, officially adopted by the City of Dayton in 2019, proposes utilizing and leveraging the VA campus as the western underpinning of a heritage tourism and ‘collaborative community’ corridor stretching across the city. This organizing corridor concept incorporates non-profits, the National Park area, the historic Wright-Dunbar neighborhood where the Wright Brothers and Paul Laurence Dunbar lived and worked, historic sites, businesses/industry, military and veterans services, and medical facilities that can be marketed together as a coherent whole which will serve as an engine of economic development. The corridor then weaves layers that include community assets and partnerships such as faith-based institutions, educational facilities, and community and youth based services. The Plan has identified strategic opportunities that touch the outer edges of the VA Campus as a way to strengthen the long-term sustainability of the campus. Those actions include supporting the enhancement and future vitality of West Town (the community-based shopping center), the redevelopment of former highly visible brownfield sites of the former McCall printing and GM/Inland manufacturing which are just blocks away from the Gettysburg Entrance to the VA Campus. The Plan also calls for the formation of an urban preserve (working title is the McCabe Preserve) that would expand existing concentrations of green spaces and parks (such as Lakeside Lake) as well introduce other compatible uses such as a solar farm and memorial parks and cemeteries. This Preserve is uniquely positioned to facilitate a potential future expansion of the historic Dayton National Cemetery to the east of the current cemetery and across Gettysburg Avenue. There is significant concentration of vacant acreage that, repositioned as a new expansion of the Dayton National Cemetery, would add to the green pastoral nature of the future McCabe Preserve. We feel strongly that our collaborative community concept, coupled with dynamic educational initiatives, can and will help Dayton address its need to stimulate job growth, and strengthen the unity, initiative, morale, and vibrant sustainability of our West Dayton neighborhoods.

The two maps included here help show the geographic relationship of the DVAMC campus to both the more broadly spaced National Aviation Heritage Area sites, and the more locally focused elements of the West Dayton Neighborhood Vision Plan.

Highlights of the Dayton Area Network of Heritage & Cultural Assets



West Day Neighborhood

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The AVHC was started
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but it is eagerly defining exciting
opportunities for expanding the

our initiatives, working cooperatively with other Miami Valley organizations, and building a dynamic economic future for this region. The pages that follow explain the changes AVHC seeks for the historic Dayton VA campus, and how those changes and accompanying initiatives and partnerships can and will create a collaborative community within the Miami Valley and a vital new engine for economic development. The AVHC welcomes and invites your comments and participation.

The AVHC has sought to define and develop a plan whose goal is not simply to dress up a piece of real estate or preserve a stack of documents for posterity. The restoration goals of the AVHC have specific, practical objectives that will increase the value of the VA campus to the community, and will tie the campus and its initiatives to the goals and objectives of other entities in the Miami Valley. Each of our initiatives has specific educational and economic benefits tied to them. These benefits are designed to be shared with other institutions in the region and to be augmented by inputs and innovations from the business, academic, and medical communities.

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III. AVHC's VISION, MISSION AND PURPOSE

1. Our Vision – AVHC's Directional Heading

To be acknowledged by the Department of Veterans Affairs as their primary catalyst to preserve its history and contributions to our nation. To preserve the assets and history of the Dayton VA Campus and make it the national archetype for honoring and supporting America's veterans, through Preservation, Inspiration and Education (PIE), and to build a collaborative community initiative that will educate, motivate, inspire and revitalize the region for years to come.

2. Our Mission – What We Do

Partner with the Department of Veterans Affairs Dayton Campus to preserve VA history and use that history to inspire and educate our local region, communities and nation.

Our mission is easy as "PIE":

Preserve . . .

- The buildings, the heritage, and the history of the Dayton VA Campus, and the personal legacies and recollections of America's veterans.

Inspire . . .

- Our community . . . to support and serve its veterans;
- Our veterans . . . to support and serve each other, and to share their stories, experiences, and wisdom with current and future generations; and,
- Our youth . . . to a higher calling of service on behalf of community, school, neighborhood, and nation.

Educate . . .

- Our nation . . . about our veterans' legacy and the importance of honoring, thanking, and supporting them;
- Our youth . . . about the service of our veterans, both in times of war and when they returned home to build and serve their communities, the meaning of sacrifice for the benefit of a national ideal, the joy of gaining knowledge, and the discovery of their own potential to serve, to lead, to learn, and not to simply preserve history but to write their own names in it; and,
- Our community . . . about the vital resource, the compelling history, and the essential mission that thrives on the Dayton VA campus.

3. Our Purpose – Why We Do What We Do

Our purpose is to honor our veterans by preserving VA history.

IV. HISTORY OF THE VA CAMPUS AND THE AVHC

The 382-acre Dayton VA Campus is not only America's largest VA campus (in terms of acreage), but it also possesses an incredible wealth of local and national history. Since its founding over 150 years ago, the Dayton VA has hosted numerous American Presidents and dignitaries, and boasts an impressive assortment of "firsts" that testify to the cultural and social impact of this majestic facility.

In addition to being the "birthplace of VA medicine" the campus was also home to the first large scale federal rehabilitation program, in which veterans received specialized vocational training, thus allowing them to eventually leave the campus to become contributing members of society. Even more significant is the Dayton VA's status as the first fully integrated federal facility. Almost a century before America's military began to racially integrate its forces, black and white veterans were thriving together on the campus, with no regard to skin color. This is a significant achievement to preserve and promote.

Other historic firsts range from the significant to the strange. The campus can lay claim to having the first permanent church built on a VA campus (and the second church ever built by the U.S. government). The Protestant Chapel was constructed in 1868, the year after Dayton became the site for the Central Branch of the National Asylum for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers. The grounds are also home to the "first monkey house constructed on a VA campus" (leading to the inevitable question "how many other monkey houses dotted our nation's VA facilities?"). The monkey house was undoubtedly part of the zoo that flourished on the grounds during the late 1800s. The colorful campus menagerie included an aviary, deer, alligators, antelopes, bear, foxes and a wolf, in addition to a full complement of livestock such as cattle, hogs, sheep and chickens.

Veteran-residents helped tend the livestock and care for the more exotic four-legged residents. Likewise, they took care of the campus grounds which were a popular destination for local residents and tourists. The VA facility became an important cross-country stop for traveling show business companies that would entertain campus residents and members of the community alike. Evenings would find an enthusiastic crowd clustered around the ornate bandstand to be entertained by the Home Band, which was popularly regarded as the second finest military band in the country, second only to the Marine Band.

The Dayton VA campus was not only a bustling hub of social activity for the entire Miami Valley, it was a visible testament to America's concern for its veterans. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the campus was the leading tourist destination east of the Mississippi River, attracting thousands upon thousands of persons from throughout the country and beyond. As the years flew by, the sprawling campus continued to thrive, but some of its structural and landscape attractions fell into disrepair. Funding cuts and changes in the social climate of the Miami Valley meant fewer visitors, fewer residents and less need, all of which has translated into gardens, grounds and buildings that have lost their usefulness. The campus has become more isolated from the community. Most current Miami Valley residents either don't know it is there or don't realize and appreciate its unique history and somber beauty.

Since its founding in the late 1990s, the *American Veterans Heritage Center, Inc.*, an IRS 501(c)(3) non-profit, has sought to revitalize and restore some of the neglected buildings on the campus. Progress has been slow but steady and AVHC Board members and volunteers have devoted countless hours and energies to advocating on behalf of the campus and working closely with VA officials to identify potential restoration projects and available funding. We have achieved some notable successes which you can read about below.

Finally, following several years, of analyses and assessments, the AVHC succeeded in working with the National Park Service and Department of Interior to designate the Dayton VAMC campus as a National Historic Landmark in 2012. This designation has enabled us to move ahead more quickly on several of our initiatives.

As these restoration and preservation efforts evolve, AVHC will be developing more projects and activities to be shared with the community and educational institutions, both on-campus and by way of collaborative outreach programming across the Miami Valley.

V. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Our strategic priorities are broken into four key areas:

1. Capital Improvements
2. Public Engagement
3. Public Events
4. Education

1. Capital Improvements (Restoration Projects)

The buildings identified for restoration in this plan have national historic significance. They are part of a larger AVHC-VA cooperative initiative to preserve campus buildings for return to their original purpose or adaptive re-use for non-profit, academic, commercial and related enterprises. Adaptive re-use is a process which adapts old buildings that have outlived their original function for new uses while retaining their historic features. Adaptive re-use can be beneficial not only to historic preservation but to sustainable development, as well. The entire process for adaptive re-use will be phased-in as follows, with the identified buildings going through each of these three phases: Phase I –Structural stabilization/restoration to include the foundation system, structural walls and framing, doors and windows, porches, and roofing system and preparation of phase 2 and 3 construction documents; Phase 2 – Interior rehabilitation to include walls, ceilings, flooring, mechanical, electrical, plumbing, fire protection system, and fire and security detection systems; and Phase 3 – Interior build-out for approved end-use.

The projects have been prioritized below, but it is the intention of the AVHC to pursue funding for these projects simultaneously. In the event that specific funding becomes available for a lower priority project, we will work that project quickly. Again, the goal is to allow restored buildings to serve their original purposes, or a modern variation thereof, when possible, especially the Chapels and the Library, or to introduce an adaptive reuse that reflects the spirit and/or purpose of the VA. The AVHC works closely with the VA, the Dayton business community, and other regional non-profits and organizations in order to identify a “best use” strategy for restorable and/or currently usable structures on the campus.

Likewise, we must discuss with our partner organizations their individual objectives for growth and revitalization and tie those objectives into the overall plan for marketing, promotions and fundraising in an effort to spur economic development for the entire region. While historic preservation is a priority, the overarching goal is to use such preservation as a springboard to economic and workforce development, and educational initiatives that will inspire and motivate the Miami Valley’s young people toward a greater appreciation for learning and for their own unique potential, as well as helping them to embrace the concept of service to their school, community and fellowman.

Priority 1 - Protestant Chapel

As the oldest building on the campus, the Protestant Chapel is rich with history. It was once a gathering place for the community at large and has become so once again following recent restoration work. The Chapel was built in 1868 and is the first permanent chapel constructed by the VA System and the second federally funded place of worship.



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Dedicated October 26, 1870, the structure has Gothic architecture with limestone quarried from the VA grounds. The building is a simple oblong with two projecting entrances at one end and a 64-foot tower. At the other end is a slated spire that is 63 foot high. The east gable has a 14 x 27 stained glass window. The interior seats about 600 people and offers a stunning view of five stained glass windows. The original woodwork was of walnut and ash. Originally, heating coils under the pews provided warmth, but they aggravated veterans' old leg wounds and were removed in 1883.

The Chapel was used for both Protestant and Catholic worship until 1898, when the Catholic Chapel was built. Catholic services were held semi-monthly on Thursday mornings and were directed by community priests, until Catholic priests were employed at the Home. At the veterans' request, a German Baptist minister was hired to conduct German language services. Church services were well attended by both veterans and citizens from the community.

By July 1998, the Chapel floor had deteriorated to such an extent that it was closed to the public. In 2001 AVHC obtained a "Save America's Treasures" matching grant that dedicated \$130,000 to restore the Protestant Chapel floor, making it once again usable by the campus and the community for a variety of for campus religious services and initiatives, as well as by the community, for religious services, weddings, funerals and other public gatherings.. In 2012, the Dayton VAMC provided appropriated funds to complete the Chapel facility restoration, leaving only restoration of the Chapel organ as a future project

Priority 2 – Administration Building

Built in 1871, the Administration Building (originally known as the Headquarters Building) is the second oldest structure on the campus and housed the administrative offices for the Central Branch. The offices of the VA Governor, Secretary, Treasurer and Adjutant were located on the first floor. The Putnam and Thomas Libraries were located on the second floor and were named for noted individuals. In 1891, both libraries were moved to the Patient Library (see Priority 3), due to the need for increased space.

The facility was remodeled numerous times over the years and has been used as a space for a variety of offices and organizations including:

- Domiciliary Officer and Domiciliary Office
- Utility Officer
- Supply Officer, Deputy Supply Officer, and Supply Office
- VFW Office and Storage Room
- DVA Office
- Legal Department with Chief and Assistant Chief Attorneys
- Special Services
- Chaplain Service

- Recreation Service
- The Sentinel Office and Publication Room
- Firing Squad Locker Room
- Credit Union
- AFGE (Labor Union)
- Veterans Handicraft Store

The Headquarters Building was used until 1989 when AFGE and the Credit Union relocated to other buildings.

Just as the Headquarters building was once home to many organizations and activities, it will be again. For several years, the AVHC has been collaborating with the Dayton Development Coalition (DDC) through its Priority Development Advisory Council (PDAC) process to advocate for the establishment of a VA Heritage and History Center (the Center) on the DVAMC campus. In 2020, the PDAC’s Economic Development Committee selected the Center as the number 1 regional economic development project. On 10 April 2020, the SEC/VA signed a Memorandum announcing the selection of the DVAMC campus as the future home of the VA Heritage and History Center (the Center), The Headquarters Building will be one of two existing historic facilities to be restored and re-purposed to house the Center. It will be the “public facing” Center facility where visitors will be welcomed, and could potentially house **VA Medical Museum** to highlight the many medical contributions made by VA personnel over the last 150 years.

Stabilization work on the Headquarters Building has been completed. While funding arrangements have yet to be finalized for the remaining construction contracts needed, this announcement allows the Dayton VAMC and regional community to initiate planning for this Center, with the eventual creation of temporary construction jobs, as well as long term management/archivist positions.

Priority 3 – Patient Library/Putnam Library

The Patient Library was erected in 1880 and was originally used as the Quartermaster’s Building. In 1891, it was converted into a library to house the Putnam and Thomas Libraries. Both Libraries were originally kept in the Headquarters Building. The libraries accumulated so many volumes that space was at a minimum and more space was needed.

The first floor was used as a reading room and circulation area, while the Putnam Library was placed on the second floor and the Thomas Library on the third floor. The building was used as a library until May 2000. Today, it houses the AVHC and a privately owned, volunteer-run military museum (The Miami Valley Military History Museum) on the first floor.



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The DVAMC currently has a Fiscal Year 2020 library restoration project in planning and design, with construction to be done in FY 2021. Once updated, this structure could be used in many possible ways.

Priority 4 – Clubhouse

The Clubhouse is a three-story Renaissance Revival style building with a full basement and a partial mezzanine floor. The building has brick walls and quoined corners on a stone base. The main entrance has an elaborate, arched ornament with a fleur-de-lis sculpted in relief. The second floor windows are colonnaded on all four sides. An exposed steel fire escape is at one side. The roof is hipped asphalt shingles with metal gutters and deep eaves, with exposed ornamental rafters. The building is separated into two sections by a central hallway. The northern section once housed the billiard room that was overlooked by two tiers of galleries, with small rooms that were used for club purposes. The upper hall was used by organizations such as the Union Veteran League, and the Naval Veterans Association. The lower hall, used by members for visiting, reading, writing, card playing and chess.

Two large halls occupy the as the Grand Army of the Republic, once known as the Social Hall, was

This facility is currently the second of the two facilities selected by the SEC/VA The VA History Center. The clubhouse will be home to much of the “backroom operations” of the Center where artifacts are curated and stored, and could potentially house a **Veterans Research Library** to improve live or virtual access veterans’ reference material.



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Priority 5 – The Catholic Chapel

The Catholic Chapel, built in 1898, provided a place for worship for the many members of the Catholic faith on campus for over a century, although it is now closed to the public due to its deteriorated conditions.

While the restored Protestant Chapel presently serves as an interfaith place of worship, the large Catholic DVAMC has a renovation project in the planning and design stage to complete this project.



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Priority 6 – Grotto & Grounds



Once a scenic centerpiece of the VA campus, the Grotto had been consumed by nature and lack of attention. In 2013, with the support of Ms. Darlene Richardson from the Department of Veterans Affairs History Office, the AVHC, the Dayton VAMC, the Montgomery County Ohio State University Extension, and the Greater Montgomery County Master Gardeners Association (GMCMGA) initiated the effort to restore the Grotto to its previous glory using Dayton VAMC funds, and private donations of both material and labor from the Home Depot Foundation. The Grotto has also achieved Level I Arboretum status and instituted an “Honor Tree” program in

which citizens can honor family members or friends by planting new or adopting current trees in their names. Today the Grotto provides a place of reflection and healing for VA patients and their families. It is visible from the highway to passersby and creates a welcoming attraction to the public who use it for wedding receptions, school graduation photos and other purposes. The restoration already completed has been so significant the National Advisory Council on Historic Preservation awarded its prestigious Chairman’s Award to the Grotto and Gardens. We are currently working with the VA and numerous landscapers and/or garden clubs, specifically the GMCMGA, to expand the restoration project where needed, and coordinate the transition of primary responsibility for future Grotto maintenance responsibilities to the DVAMC.

Priority 7 – The Defenders of Freedom Walk of Honor

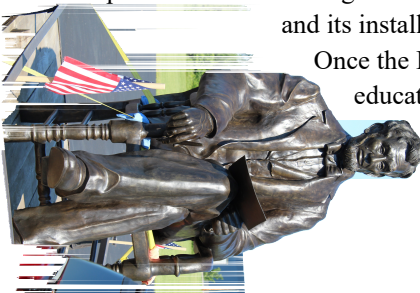


In 2016, AVHC and the DVAMC initiated the first phase of a Defenders of Freedom Walk of Honor to recognize Veterans and others who have contributed to our Nation’s security. When completed this Walk of Honor will consist of a walkway at three locations in the historic section of the campus. Existing concrete walkways in these three locations will be “edged” with commemorative bricks to be sold to the public and installed as sales progress. Proceeds from brick sales will be applied to other projects in this strategic plan.

Priority 8 – The Lincoln Statue

In 2019, the AVHC launched an effort with a local artist to create a “Sitting Lincoln” statue and erect it on the DVAMC campus. The effort is being funded entirely by private money and in-kind donations. The statue itself has been completed, and its installation in a newly designated “Lincoln Park” on campus will be completed in late 2020.

Once the Lincoln Park has been established, we ask our Education Committee to develop educational classes on the life and contributions of President Lincoln.



Additional Projects

As funding becomes available, there are numerous other projects which may be undertaken on the VA grounds through a cooperative effort between the AVHC, the VA, and other private or public organizations. Once funded, these projects offer a variety of possible future uses.

Freedom House –Freedom House is being examined as a future location for either of two possible uses. First, it could become a site for VETS-Town, an initiative to house veteran-owned small businesses or disabled veteran-owned small businesses at reduced rental cost. Once these VOSB or DVOSB businesses are housed, we can work with local universities and mentors to help them complete business plans, and obtain the necessary GSA schedules needed to bid on Government projects. A second possible use would be to provide office space for the new VA Heritage and History Center.

Doctor's Row – We are currently reviewing three options for the five houses known as Doctor's Row. The first is to convert these five houses into 5 duplexes to house homeless veterans with families as part of a larger Enhanced Use Lease homeless veterans housing project which would also include new construction of a multi-story facility to house single homeless veterans. The second option is to dedicate each house to one branch of service. Contained within that house would be a recruiting office, a veteran's services officer and a modest museum/learning center that features the history of that specific branch of service, with an emphasis on ties to Ohio and the Miami Valley. Finally, the third option could be to relocate the VA's VISN 10 headquarters from leased facilities in Cincinnati to the Doctors Row facilities

Dayton VAMC Grounds - The grounds themselves offer tremendous opportunities for campus-based community outreach activities. One relatively inexpensive option would be the development of a combination community and Veterans' Therapy Garden. This project would provide plots for community vegetable gardens and could possibly tie in with the Dayton MetroParks' 'Grow with Your Neighbors' program. It would also feature land dedicated to helping veterans by means of horticultural therapy, which is used in a variety of medical facilities and settings. Additionally, the therapy gardens could be used as a mentoring opportunity between participating veterans and young people in the community, providing inter-generational exposure to agricultural learning opportunities as well as job and business skills. The end result could be a Farmer's Market, developed and manned by the therapy vets and the participating young people. This is the type of project that excites potential funders, because of its medical and rehabilitative elements, as well as its educational and mentoring components tied to a solid concept of workforce development and inter-generational experiences.

A clever promotional and historical component would be to declare that this is "*Dayton's Victory Garden*," drawing attention to the World War II Victory Garden concept and emphasizing that these Gardens constitute a victory in revitalizing the VA campus and a victory in helping Dayton residents overcome the recession and reinforce their own self-sufficiency.

Burial Tunnel – The AVHC is supporting the Dayton National Cemetery Support Committee (DNCSC) on this project. Once the channel through which deceased soldiers were transported from the hospital to the cemetery for burial, this majority of tunnel has collapsed or been filled in many years ago. However, that portion of the tunnel closest to the cemetery and the partially covered stone archway, which exits to the cemetery, still remain intact and offer a macabre historic appeal. While the entire tunnel is beyond repair, the DNCSC, working with Ball State University, has determined it is possible to restore a portion of the tunnel, and the tunnel façade. Such a project would be of interest to historians and military enthusiasts, and would provide a compelling stop on campus tours, as well as a fascinating component to the VA Medical Museum, serving as a reminder of how far we have come with our VA care.

Former Lincoln Academy Building – This facility which was formerly occupied by the Lincoln Academy for preschool education, is now available for other uses. We are currently reviewing two such re-proposing initiatives. First would be to provide the new VA History Office with temporary storage space for VA artifacts until such time as the Clubhouse construction projects have been completed. The second possible use would be an alternative location (in addition to Doctors Row) to house a relocated VISN 10 Headquarters.

We recognize historic restoration is not easy to fund, particularly in a slumping economy, unless there is a clear and immediate use for the restored structures. The AVHC intends to work with the VA to assign specific occupants and usages for the proposed restoration projects. Once the restoration efforts ramp up, the AVHC plans to make progress trackable online, via the AVHC website, to keep donors up-to-date, and energize others toward participation.

2. Public Engagement

By involving the Greater Miami Valley businesses, organizations and individuals in the revitalization of the Dayton VA campus and introducing them to on-campus and outreach projects and programs, we will help to stimulate a renaissance of the community as a whole. This can be done by building relationships between all facets of the VA campus and its external counterparts (medical, religious, academic, historic and/or non-profit organizations and veterans services offices), as well as by encouraging the presence of innovative commercial enterprises that complement or augment the VA mission. We could even tie this collaborative effort to a specific theme as San Antonio has successfully done with its “silicon circle” concept. There is a broad range of programs and activities that can help tie together the campus and the community. To improve our outreach and communication with the public and regional businesses, AVHC has created a “Strategic Map” with initiatives to help guide and ensure our long term viability. We are modernizing our AVHC website to provide a streamlined, more effective user experience for those who visit the site. We are implementing non-profit focused customer relationship management software to better integrate our volunteer and donor management efforts. We are expanding our fundraising initiatives to include programs such as “Wreaths Across America” and book sales to increase our operating capital. And, finally, to re-invigorate our regional communities’ commitment to veterans and their families, we are updating the “Community Covenant” we created nearly a decade ago.

Heritage Tourism – A means to an end – Dayton’s dynamic military and aviation heritage provides a strong bond with the past that can and should be better utilized for the purposes of tourism. Visitors seeking to follow the history of aviation, aerospace, and the American military (specifically the Air Force) can do so through a variety of existing and proposed facilities and initiatives. Like the multitude of museums and learning centers that sprawl across Washington, D.C., Dayton should tie together its vital heritage components into a cohesive network for marketing and promotional purposes.

While the aviation component is certainly one of Dayton’s best-known heritage attractions, it is by no means the only one. Projects such as the National Aviation Heritage Area, Dayton’s multi-site National Park honoring the Wright Brothers and Paul Laurence Dunbar, National Museum of the United States Air Force, and the Aviation Trail concept can be tied to an overarching heritage theme that emphasizes Dayton’s reputation for innovation and service. That overarching innovation element can then be tied into a “collaborative community” concept, thus bringing together past, present and future beneath the heritage umbrella.

Statistics on heritage tourism as defined by the Travel Industry Association (TIA) reflect the following realities regarding the appeal and impact of heritage tourism:

- Two-thirds (65 percent) of American adult travelers included heritage or culture on a trip. This translates into approximately 92.7 million travelers per year.
- Heritage travelers typically stay 4.7 nights on trips compared to 3.4 nights for others.
- They stay longer and spend more money – an average of \$631 per trip, compared to \$457 for other travelers.
- Such travelers are more likely to stay in a hotel, motel, or bed and breakfast, and 18 percent spend \$1,000 or more on a trip (a higher percentage than other travelers).

- Forty-four percent include shopping (compared to 33 percent for other travelers). Heritage shoppers look for unique items that represent the destination. Such travelers are more likely to take a group tour and include a broader variety of activities in their itineraries.
- Heritage travelers tend to be older and are more likely to have a post-graduate degree.

While these numbers may change over time, it is clear that heritage tourism, when properly thought out and implemented, can have tremendous value. The argument can be made that a “down economy” only increases its value, as travelers and vacationers seek to derive greater benefits from the dollars they spend. Creating a heritage tourism corridor that entertains, educates and informs will benefit Dayton economically, and will help define and reinforce the region’s value in a manner that shields it from inevitable future economic shifts.

Miami Valley Military History Museum (MVMHM) – The MVMHM, located in the Putnam Library, is a privately-owned, volunteer run museum which, in accordance with the DVAMC/AVHC Memorandum of Understanding, currently falls under the umbrella of the AVHC. This modest but compelling museum has many visitors annually and supports many patient programs at the VA hospital – it is the most active AVHC “touch point” to the DVAMC patients and the public at large. The MVMHM received its own 501(c)(3) designation in 2019, and, as a result, can now seek sustainable funding or undertake any type of expansion effort. This museum is a valued component of the AVHC

National Veterans Hall of Fame – Ohio was the first state to establish a State Veterans Hall of Fame to recognize veterans’ post-retirement contributions to their communities. Each year candidates are nominated and those selected are honored at an annual induction ceremony. Several other states followed Ohio’s lead and created their own Veterans Hall of Fame, many using Ohio’s program and selection criteria as templates for their own. At present no National Veterans Hall of Fame exists. This idea proposes to create and locate such a national Veterans Hall of Fame in Ohio by leveraging Ohio’s history and expertise at running a state program.

3. Public Events

Patriot Freedom Festival– The AVHC has hosted a Memorial Day event, the Patriot’s Freedom Festival, on the campus grounds for nearly two decades. A free event for adults and children, each year we achieve progress on our goals to make this event profitable, educational and self-sustaining. There remains a clear need to better educate the public as to the presence and purpose of this event. We are working to better establish media and corporate partnerships as early as January and February (in order to aid fundraising). Likewise, local academic institutions and media outlets must be integral parts of the advance planning and promotional process. Media should include not only TV, radio and daily newspapers, but also the numerous community weeklies, alternative publications, and even organizational newsletters. Local veterans’ organizations such as VFW posts, American Legions, etc., should be contacted individually for participation and promotion months in advance.

Patriots Salute – The Patriots Salute is a new musical event planned for September 2020. We hope to make this an annual event as well if it is supported by the public.

Annual Veterans Day Observance – Of course, this is one of the key calendar dates that must be maximized as an opportunity to share the story of the VA as well as the rich history of the Dayton VA campus. One immediate goal is to create a video that can be featured on commercial television, in classrooms and on regional cable access channels, paying tribute to Miami Valley veterans and to the contributions of the Dayton VA campus. Other possible activities could include a student photography and art initiative that brings students onto the campus to sketch and photograph the facility. This

activity would lead to an annual Veterans Day art/photo show on the VA campus, spotlighting the campus itself and the talents of local students.

4. Education

A recently formed Education Committee has breathed new life into the educational component of our mission by identifying and initiating several projects.

We created a children's "Footlocker Program" using the MVMHM's Footlocker program as a template. The footlockers contain typical equipment items (helmets, canteens, etc.) used by service members. Once we developed contents, scripts, and storyboards for each item (targeting younger children in the K-4 grades), we filmed short videos explaining the purpose and importance of each item in the footlocker. The footlockers and accompanying videos can be used independently or in conjunction with each other and presented either live or virtually. We intend to create similar videos targeting older children through grade 12. We are also reviewing proposals for an adult level footlocker program for use in the community

We are developing a program to make service-related books available to children – including existing service-related books, like "A Home For Our Heroes", or new, yet to be created books discussing the "core values" of each Military Service, using "Andy & Elmer" books as a model. Education Committee volunteers are building scripts and storyboards now.

Simultaneous to development of the footlocker and book programs addressed above, our volunteers are meeting with many community organizations – school curriculum directors (including STEM schools), regional libraries, interface church groups, civic groups, veterans service organizations, JROTC detachments – to build deployments plans for our educational material.

Other volunteers are establishing a "speakers bureau" to help carry our educational message to organizations seeking a live presentation, while still other volunteers are working to place our educational material in the "Education tab" of the AVHC website. We are making every effort to provide access to this material to as many children and adults as possible.

The initiatives described above are ongoing, but several others are still in planning:

- Create child and adult leadership programs based on the military experience

- Create mentorship camps for at-risk youth

- Build summer youth programs with a focus on military history and the DVAMC campus

Initiate a Quarterly Teacher Training Programs (For CEUs – Continuing Education Units). Once the education program is fully defined and developed, we could initiate training sessions for regional educators on the VA campus. These sessions would focus on using the historical assets of the campus and the individual life stories of America's veterans as a tool for enhancing student understanding of and appreciation for American history, language arts, math, science, technology and, of course, leadership. Scheduling these activities in conjunction with in-service days, and providing the CEU credits, will encourage greater teacher participation.

Finally, we will contact local Scout Troops to determine if some aspect of Grotto maintenance could be completed as one or more senior scouting projects, i.e., contact the Miami Valley Scouting leadership with the idea of creating a large project that brings together Scouts from different neighborhoods and regions of the Miami Valley, each working on a separate element of the project, but working in unison toward the larger goal. It would be a wonderful opportunity to not only spotlight the VA campus, Scouting and the Dayton region, but also to encourage young people of different races, religions, ethnicity and economic backgrounds, by working together, to realize there are no important differences between us.

VI. CONCLUSION

The success or failure of this plan will depend on the energy, passion and conviction of those who embrace it. It will also depend on the AVHC's ability to energetically, but *systematically*, sell the concepts to its partners and participants across the Miami Valley. This plan is designed either to be introduced incrementally, as funding permits, or rolled out in tandem with related community initiatives. In the best-case scenario, the AVHC, VA officials, community leaders and participating organizations will pool their resources, intellectual capital and enthusiasm to reach out to individuals and organizations who can help make the dream a reality.

Bringing this vision to fruition will require careful coordination, the sharing of resources and information, and the ability to compromise, cooperate and think creatively. The essential first step is to share the vision with local leaders and members of the media. The accompanying marketing plan outlines methods for building the momentum and establishing a network of enthusiastic partners.

Properly implemented, this plan will not only support and honor our veterans, but will also inspire and motivate our young people, even as it builds a coalition of business, academic, non-profit, medical and military partners across the region. In so doing, it will help renew and restore the historic VA campus, revitalize the Miami Valley's economic future, and create a greater sense of connection and understanding between our men and women in uniform and all those who have benefitted or benefit today from their legacy of service and sacrifice.

