

# STATE VETERANS' NURSING HOME MISSION & 2021 APPROPRIATIONS PROJECT REQUESTS



*Legislative Delegation Meeting – December 4, 2020*

## STATE VETERANS' NURSING HOME MISSION

In 2013, the Legislature commissioned an independent, *needs-based* site selection study for a new State Veterans' Nursing Home. Collier County ranked *first* on the list but was *not* selected due to site location concerns. Initially ranked seventh, St. Lucie County was selected and will be opening very soon.

Since that time, the citizens of Collier County have taken bold steps to fill the Southwest Florida regional void of veterans' long-term care. Voters approved a \$30 million funding stream to greatly supplement, if not entirely replace, the State's 35% facility construction match. Recently, the County acquired the ideally situated Golden Gate Golf Course with a portion of the property set aside as a potential facility location. This site would address the lack of local amenities and acute care supports that were cited in the 2013 proposal debriefing.

Based upon its ranking by the U.S. Veterans Administration (VA) as a state in "great need" of additional veterans' beds, it is *highly* probable that Florida will be awarded the 65% federal construction grant match should the State complete the application process. However, to get to the application filing:

- the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs (FDVA) must approve the site location and accept the \$30 million in Collier County funds as supplement to/replacement of the State construction match;
- the Florida Cabinet must approve Collier County as the next location for a State Veterans' Nursing Home; and,
- the Legislature, by the time construction is completed, must have appropriated sufficient funds for FDVA operational and maintenance costs of the new facility.

Wounded Warriors of Collier County, Home Base (a Red Sox Foundation and Massachusetts General Hospital Program for veteran and family care), and the Collier County Veterans Council Board of Directors support the mission to be selected as the next location for a State Veterans' Nursing Home and have dispatched letters to Governor DeSantis promoting the project.

**Request:** Delegation support for Collier County's selection as the next site for a State Veterans' Nursing Home, including assistance in the critical steps of securing a site visit/location approval by FDVA, project approval by the Florida Cabinet, State application for the 65% construction matching funds by the Veterans Administration, and advanced planning for the budgeting of associated FDVA operations and maintenance costs in the Florida General Appropriations Act.

**Districts:** All

## APPROPRATIONS PROJECT REQUESTS

### Golden Gate Senior Center Construction/Expansion

This project request would provide funding for the architectural and engineering design for construction and expansion of the Golden Gate Senior Center to better serve community seniors. Increased building size would allow for better organization of programs and activities and would provide much needed meeting rooms and office space to help address client needs. Future hardening of the facility could also provide safe, community sheltering and convenient access to aid during and after natural disasters and other large-scale emergencies.

This project will improve and expand upon the mental and physical wellbeing, nutrition, financial resiliency, safety, and other life-enhancing services of Collier's senior population and their caregivers. More than 1,300 individuals are regularly served by the Senior Center.

**Request:** \$250,000 in State appropriations for the design of the Golden Gate Senior Center Construction/Expansion. *(A local match of \$250,000 is available for this project.)*

**Districts:** **Senator Passidomo – Representative Borrero**

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### Lake Park Boulevard Capital Improvements and Water Quality Flowway

This project is the first critical step to master plan a multi-million dollar series of infrastructure projects including septic-to-sewer, stormwater system rehabilitation, roadway improvements, and other site improvements to promote functionality, health, and safety.

This project will improve transportation conditions, wastewater management, groundwater quality, surface water quality, and protect nearby waterbodies. This project's location adjacent to Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve makes water quality improvements a high priority. This area serves a population that is highly challenged by the cost of housing and other essential costs of living.

**Request:** \$250,000 in State appropriations for the Lake Park Boulevard Capital Improvements and Water Quality Flowway. *(A local match of \$250,000 is available for this project.)*

**Districts:** **Senator Passidomo – Representative Rommel**