3.0 Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences of the Alternatives

This section discusses environmental considerations for the project, the contextual setting of the affected environment, and impacts of the No-Action Alternative and Proposed Action.

3.1 Aesthetics

3.1.1 Definition of the Resource

A visual resource is usually defined as an area of unique beauty that is a result of the combined characteristics of the natural aspects of land and human aspects of land use. Wild and scenic rivers, unique topography, and geologic landforms are examples of the natural aspects of land. Examples of human aspects of land use include scenic highways and historic districts.

Visual resources can be regulated by management plans, policies, ordinances, and regulations that determine the types of uses that are allowable or protect specially designated or visually sensitive areas.

3.1.2 Affected Environment

The Omaha VAMC campus is in an urban setting within the City of Omaha. The campus abuts the Field Club golf course and Field Club Trail on the east, the Douglas County Health Department and Health Center to the north, residences of the Morton Meadows neighborhood on the west, and a major retail and commercial corridor along Center Street to the south including the Hanscom Park neighborhood (see Figure 1-2, also see zoning map Figure 3-6). The Omaha VAMC main campus consists of the main hospital building constructed in approximately 1950, various buildings support buildings, surface parking lots, and green space.

3.1.3 Environmental Consequences

3.1.3.1 No-Action Alternative

Under the No-Action Alternative, the visual aesthetics at the Omaha VAMC would remain unchanged. The Omaha VAMC campus facilities, including buildings, parking, and pedestrian infrastructure, would continue to exist in their current condition.

3.1.3.2 Proposed Action

Aesthetics or visual resources would not be significantly affected by the implementation of the Proposed Action, as all construction and demolition activities would take place within the already developed portion of the Omaha VAMC campus.

The new ACC, reconfigured parking, and new expanded green space would be visually compatible with the existing industrial nature of the VAMC main campus and nearby properties and has been designed to blend in with the existing VAMC facilities and landscape (See Figure 2-2). The new ACC would most likely be shielded from view from the golf course and neighboring
Field Club Trail due to the tree line along the eastern edge of the Omaha VAMC campus. The new ACC would also be constructed in a central location within the Omaha VAMC campus and in a relatively low-lying area currently occupied by a surface parking lot. Furthermore, the new ACC would include three levels with a partial fourth floor mechanical penthouse and would be significantly lower in height than the main hospital building (see Figure 2-2). The new ACC would most likely not be seen from areas around Center Street or South 42nd Street. From these two locations south and west of the Omaha VAMC campus, the new ACC would be shielded by the existing main hospital building and the steep grassy embankments that are present due to the topography of the site (See Photographs 5 & 6). The new ACC would potentially be visible from the north along Woolworth Avenue between the Omaha VAMC campus and the Douglas County Health Department facilities; however, the design and location of the building would not conflict with the surroundings.

Photographs 5 & 6. View looking northwest from Center Street (5) and southeast from South 42nd Street (6) showing the grassy embankments along the roadways around the Omaha VAMC campus.

It is unlikely that the new ACC would impact the skyline or alter any longer-distance views from the surrounding areas. Due to their height, the main hospital building at the Omaha VAMC campus and the nearby Douglas County Health Department building would continue to be the dominant visual structures in the area.

There would be temporary impacts to aesthetics on the Omaha VAMC campus from site preparation, demolition, and construction. Construction zones would be screened if necessary, and impacted vegetation would be reseeded and replanted as needed.
3.2 Air Quality

3.2.1 Definition of the Resource

Air Quality Index (AQI)

The AQI is an index for reporting daily air quality, which shows how clean or polluted the air is and explains what associated health effects might be of concern. The AQI focuses on health effects that may be experienced within a few hours or days after breathing polluted air. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) calculates the AQI for five major pollutants regulated by the Clean Air Act (CAA): ground level ozone, particulate pollution (also known as particulate matter), carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, and nitrogen dioxide. For each of these pollutants, EPA has established national air quality standards to protect public health. Ground-level ozone and airborne particles are the two pollutants that pose the greatest threat to human health in the United States.

The AQI is divided into six categories: good, moderate, unhealthy for sensitive groups, unhealthy, very unhealthy, and hazardous. Each category corresponds to a different level of health concern. The six levels of health concern and their descriptions are:

- **Good**: AQI is 0 to 50; air quality is considered satisfactory and air pollution poses little or no risk.
- **Moderate**: AQI is 51 to 100; air quality is acceptable. However, for some pollutants there may be a moderate health concern for a very small number of people. For example, people who are unusually sensitive to ozone may experience respiratory symptoms.
- **Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups**: AQI is 101 to 150; although the general public is not likely to be affected at this AQI range, people with lung disease, older adults, and children are at a greater risk from exposure to ozone, whereas people with heart and lung disease, older adults, and children are at greater risk from the presence of particles in the air.
- **Unhealthy**: AQI is 151 to 200; everyone may begin to experience some adverse health effects and members of the sensitive groups may experience effects that are more serious.
- **Very Unhealthy**: AQI is 201 to 300; this would trigger a health alert signifying that everyone may experience more serious health effects.
- **Hazardous**: AQI is greater than 300; this would trigger a health warning of emergency conditions. The entire population is more than likely to be affected.

Criteria Air Pollutants

The CAA requires EPA to set National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for six common air pollutants (40 CFR 50). These commonly found air pollutants are located all over the United States and include particulate matter, ground-level ozone, carbon monoxide, sulfur oxides, nitrogen oxides, and lead. These pollutants can harm human health and the environment, or cause property damage. The EPA calls these pollutants “criteria” air pollutants because it regulates them by developing human, health based, and/or environmentally based criteria for setting permissible levels. Table 3-1 provides the NAAQS set by the EPA.
The EPA defines a non-attainment area as an area considered to have air quality worse than the NAAQS as defined in the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1970 (PL 91-604 Sec 109). Nonattainment areas must have and implement a plan to meet the standard, or risk losing some forms of federal financial assistance.

### Table 3-1. National Ambient Air Quality Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pollutant</th>
<th>Primary Standards</th>
<th>Secondary Standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level</td>
<td>Averaging Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbon Monoxide (CO)</td>
<td>9 ppm</td>
<td>8-hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35 ppm</td>
<td>1-hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead (Pb)</td>
<td>0.15 µg/m³</td>
<td>Rolling 3-month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.5 µg/m³</td>
<td>average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂)</td>
<td>53 ppb</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100 ppb</td>
<td>1-Hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Particulate Matter (PM₁₀)</td>
<td>150 µg/m³</td>
<td>24-hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Particulate Matter (PM₂₅)</td>
<td>15.0 µg/m³</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35 µg/m³</td>
<td>24-hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ozone (O₃)</td>
<td>0.070 ppm</td>
<td>8-hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sulfur Dioxide (SO₂)</td>
<td>0.03 ppm</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.14 ppm</td>
<td>24-hour</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: EPA 2017a (October 30, 2017)

ppb – part per billion
ppm – parts per million
µg/m³ – micrograms per cubic meter

#### 3.2.2 Affected Environment

Douglas County air quality is generally good, with one unhealthy AQI value recorded in 2017 (EPA 2017a, Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality [NDEQ] 2017). Tables 3-2 display the AQI for Douglas County, Nebraska.

Furthermore, Douglas County is currently in attainment for all NAAQS pollutant levels (NDEQ 2017). According to the most recent 2017 NDEQ air quality data, the state of Nebraska has never had a declared non-attainment determination (NDEQ 2017).

### Table 3-2. AQI for Douglas County in 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Days when Air Quality was…</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups</th>
<th>Unhealthy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># Days with AQI</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>75 ppb</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: EPA 2017b. Data as of October 30, 2017
3.2.3 Environmental Consequences

3.2.3.1 No-Action Alternative

Under the No-Action Alternative, air quality conditions at the site would remain unchanged. Emission from the continued operation of the Omaha VAMC facilities and from local mobile sources, such as automobiles would persist.

3.2.3.2 Proposed Action

Construction and operation of the Proposed Action would be expected to produce localized temporary effects on air quality due to construction activities. No permanent or long-term impacts to air quality are anticipated.

Construction activities associated with the Proposed Action are expected to result in temporary increases in localized particulate emissions. Operation of construction vehicles such as dump trucks, bulldozers, cranes, earth-moving activities, and waste-disposal actions would produce temporary and localized emissions of particulate matter, volatile organic compounds, nitrogen oxides, and carbon monoxide.

Fugitive emissions from demolition activities would be mitigated through Best Management Practices (BMPs). BMPs that would be implemented include:

- Machinery and other construction vehicle engines would not be left to idle unnecessarily; and
- Standard dust suppression procedures would be used to control fugitive dust. Haul roads would be kept wet, and any soil that is deposited on nearby paved roads by vehicles would be removed from the roads and returned to the site or to an appropriate disposal area.

The new ACC would include a 750-kilowatt (kW) emergency generator to provide supplemental power. The generator would cause short-term local fugitive emission increases. These increases are expected to be minor, as the generator would only run during power outages.

3.3 Cultural Resources

3.3.1 Definition of the Resource

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, and implementing regulations found at 36 CFR 800, require that federal agencies consider any effect a proposed action may have on historic properties. This is generally accomplished through the Section 106 compliance process, as follows:

- Identify consulting parties;
- Identify and evaluate historic properties located within the Area of Potential Effect (APE) established for an undertaking;
- Assess adverse effects on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP); and
• Consult with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and, as appropriate, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and other interested parties to resolve adverse effects.

Four main criteria determine if a property is eligible for inclusion on the NRHP. A property is considered eligible if it meets one or more of those criteria listed below:

• Criterion A: Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad pattern of our history.
• Criterion B: Associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
• Criterion C: Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or that possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.
• Criterion D: Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.

Cultural resources generally include archaeological sites, historic properties, traditional cultural places, and other places where significant historic activities have taken place. These sites are often considered valuable to the human environment, and measures must be taken to ensure that they are treated appropriately.

Congress also passed the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 (PL 95-341, 42 USC 1996) to protect and preserve for American Indians their inherent right of freedom to believe, express, and exercise their traditional religions including, but not limited to, access to sites, use and possession of sacred objects, and the freedom to worship through ceremonial and traditional sites. Therefore, the law requires that the effects of a federal undertaking on Native American sites or places (prehistoric or historic) that have religious, ceremonial, or sacred aspects be evaluated within the context of this law. Consultation with the appropriate Tribal Historic Conservation Officer (THPO) should be conducted to determine if Native American resources have the potential to be affected, and to develop appropriate avoidance or mitigation measures if needed.

3.3.2 Affected Environment

There are 179 properties and districts listed on the NRHP in Douglas County, including three National Historic Landmarks (NRHP 2017). Table 3-3 summarizes the 15 sites that are within one mile of the Omaha VAMC. The closest NRHP site is the Field Club Historic District, which is roughly bounded by Pacific Street, South 32nd Avenue, Center Street, and South 36th Street just east of the Omaha VAMC campus.

According to the Nebraska SHPO, the Omaha VAMC is not eligible for listing in the NRHP. Although the original core of the hospital complex was built in 1950 and is therefore of age, many additions were added to the building between 1960 and the mid-1980s (Nebraska SHPO response dated July 8, 2011 included in Appendix A).
Table 3-3. NHRP Listings in Douglas County, Nebraska  
Within One Mile of the Omaha VAMC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Name</th>
<th>Date Listed</th>
<th>Approximate Distance from Omaha VAMC (miles)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guy C. Barton House</td>
<td>08/14/73</td>
<td>0.97 northeast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackstone Hotel</td>
<td>01/11/85</td>
<td>0.87 northeast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bradford-Pettis House</td>
<td>07/21/83</td>
<td>0.8 north</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brandeis-Millard House</td>
<td>11/28/80</td>
<td>0.76 north</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbian School</td>
<td>11/28/90</td>
<td>0.58 north</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Club Historic District</td>
<td>11/15/00</td>
<td>0.44 east</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia Row House</td>
<td>11/12/82</td>
<td>0.98 northeast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Havens-Page House</td>
<td>10/07/82</td>
<td>0.85 northeast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles D. McLaughlin House</td>
<td>11/08/82</td>
<td>0.74 northeast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normandie Apartments</td>
<td>12/06/91</td>
<td>0.88 northeast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park Avenue Apartment District</td>
<td>07/02/08</td>
<td>0.98 northeast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park School</td>
<td>11/29/89</td>
<td>0.92 east</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selby Apartments</td>
<td>12/30/04</td>
<td>0.49 northeast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gottlieb Storz House</td>
<td>08/07/74</td>
<td>0.92 northeast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrace Court</td>
<td>07/02/08</td>
<td>0.94 northeast</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NRHP 2017

3.3.3 Environmental Consequences

3.3.3.1 No-Action Alternative

Under the No-Action Alternative, there would be no impact to Cultural Resources. There would be no modification to any existing structures, no construction of new structures, and no excavation activities that would potentially unearth cultural artifacts.

3.3.3.2 Proposed Action

Impacts to Cultural Resources are not anticipated due to the Proposed Action

Coordination with the Nebraska SHPO indicated that activities associated with the Proposed Action are unlikely to impact any eligible or listed prehistoric or historic cultural resource, and provided a determination of no historic properties affected (Nebraska SHPO response dated October 4, 2017 included in Appendix A). No response was received from initial consultation with the THPO for the Sac and Fox Nation of Missouri in Kansas and Nebraska, the Omaha Tribe, the Santee Sioux Nation, the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska, the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska, and the Iowa tribe of Kansas and Nebraska.

The Nebraska SHPO also indicated that the Omaha VAMC campus had not previously been surveyed by a professional archeologist, and that buried or obscured cultural or human remains may be discovered due to construction activities associated with the Proposed Action. Should artifacts or human remains be discovered due to the Proposed Action, work would be immediately
halted and remains left in place in accordance with Standard VA Construction Policy. The Nebraska SHPO, THPO, and appropriate authorities would be immediately notified to re-initiate the Section 106 and tribal consultation process. In coordination with the Nebraska SHPO and THPO, the services of a professional archaeologist would likely be retained to evaluate the findings prior to commencing work.

It is also recommended that on-site personnel closely monitor mechanical excavation of soils, and any other ground disturbing activities that may result, for cultural materials that might be revealed or unearthed throughout the course of construction. In the event of an inadvertent discovery, the Section 106 and THPO consultation process would be re-initiated with the appropriate consulting parties.

3.4 Geology and Soils

3.4.1 Definition of the Resource

Geology

Geological resources consist of solid materials that make up the Earth’s surface and subsurface such as rocks, minerals, and other unconsolidated materials. Most commonly, these resources are described in terms of topography, physiography, composition, soils, geologic hazards, and paleontology.

Soils

Soils are the unconsolidated mineral or organic materials on the immediate surface of the earth that serve as natural mediums for the growth of land plants. Soil is made up of particles of broken rock that have been chemically and environmentally altered through various processes, such as weathering and erosion. Various factors that affect the formation of soils include parent materials, climate, topography, biological factors, and time. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and the National Cooperative Soil Survey (NCSS) provide an elaborate classification and mapping of soil types throughout the United States.

3.4.2 Affected Environment

Geology

Douglas County generally contains bedrock of the Cretaceous Period dating between 66 to 145 million years ago at a depth ranging from 30 to 275 feet. Overlaying the bedrock are layers of loess, till, and alluvium. Pockets of sand and gravel are also present throughout, and have been found to be excellent sources of groundwater (University of Nebraska School of Natural Resources 2017).

The most recent United States Geologic Survey (USGS) long-term seismicity model (2014) shows eastern Nebraska as a low-hazard area with respect to future earthquake activity (Figure 3-1).
Soils

The project is located within the Nebraska/Kansas Loess Hills Level IV Ecoregion of the Western Corn Belt Plains (Chapman et al. 2001). These areas include dissected hills with deep, silty, well-drained soils supported a potential natural vegetation of tallgrass prairie with scattered oak-hickory forests along stream valleys (Nebraska Game and Parks Commission Nebraska [NGPC] Natural Heritage Program [NHP] 2017a, Rolfsmeier and Steinauer 2010) (Figure 3-2). Cropland agriculture is now common and ample precipitation in the growing season supports dryland agriculture, with only a few areas requiring irrigation.

The Omaha VAMC campus and adjacent areas include two mapped soil units (Figure 3-3). The Urban land – Udarents complex, zero to 16 percent slopes, covers approximately 98 percent of the Omaha VAMC campus. This complex is a silt loam formed from silty loess parent material. This soil is typically greater than 80 inches in depth frequently found on hillslopes and sideslopes. There are no prime farmland soils within the ESA (USDA NRCS 2017).

Figure 3-1. USGS 2014 Long-Term Seismic Hazard Map.

The map displays earthquake ground motions for various probability levels across the United States. These probabilities are applied in seismic provisions of building codes, insurance rate structures, risk assessments, and other public policy. The Omaha VAMC site lies within the two to four percent ground acceleration probability or very low hazard range (USGS 2014).
The ESA no longer supports naturally occurring plant communities. The ESA and the surrounding vicinity have been converted to urban land uses. The Omaha VAMC campus slopes downward gently to the north and west with on-site elevation ranging from 1,180 to 1,250 feet above sea level.

Figure 3-2. Ecoregions of Nebraska Showing the Omaha VAMC Location in Red (NGPC NHP 2017a).
Omaha VA Medical Center
Veterans Ambulatory Care Center
Omaha, Douglas County, Nebraska
Olsson Project # 017-2641
Soils Map
Figure 3-3

Legend
- Environmental Study Area
- SSURGO Soils

Data Source: 2017 Douglas County Imagery

1 inch = 250 feet

County Hospital Dr.
Pine St
Hickory St
Walnut St
Shirley St
Woolworth Ave
S 38th St
Frances St
S 40th St
S 39th St
S 38th Ave
Center St

8035
8157
9719
9720
9719
9711
9720
9718
9719
9720
9720
8157

S 38th St
Center St
Omaha VA Medical Center Campus

F:\2017\2501-3000\017-2641\40-Design\GIS\17-10-26_NRPL_VAMC Figures.mxd  User: RDoty
3.4.3 Environmental Consequences

3.4.3.1 No-Action Alternative

Under the No-Action Alternative, no demolition, construction, or site upgrade activities would occur that would affect geological resources or soils. Thus, no impacts to geological resources or soils would be expected to result from this alternative.

3.4.3.2 Proposed Action

Geology

Under the Proposed Action, construction and demolition activities could result in modifications to subsurface features. The excavation of surficial soil for the placement of slabs for new structures would have a long-term effect on topography of the subsurface geologic formation; however, this effect would be minor as the existing subsurface geologic formation does not have a specific economic (i.e., mining resource) or other structural use. The use of this formation as structural support for a new building would be consistent with adjacent land uses.

Soils

Soil disturbance is defined as anything that causes the impairment of physical, chemical, and biological properties and processes, such as erosion, compaction, displacement, rutting, burning, loss of organic matter, and mass movement of soil.

Implementation of the Proposed Action would result in earth-moving and excavation activities limited to the immediate vicinity of the construction and demolition work areas. During earth-moving activities, soils would be subject to erosion. BMPs for erosion and sedimentation control would be implemented during construction to mitigate the potential for soil erosion during earth-moving and excavation activities.

Areas disturbed by excavation would be backfilled and subsequently re-planted, re-seeded, or sodded. Erosion and sediment control measures implemented during construction activities are also required to comply with stormwater pollution prevention rules. A Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPP) would be prepared and implemented prior to initiating any site-disturbing activities as required by the City of Omaha.

As with almost any construction project involving the use of heavy equipment, there is some risk of an accidental fuel or chemical spill, and the potential contamination of soils. To reduce the potential for soil contamination, fuels would be stored and maintained in a designated equipment staging area. A person(s) designated as being responsible for equipment fueling would closely monitor the fueling operation and an emergency spill kit containing absorption pads, absorbent material, a shovel or rake, and other cleanup items, would be readily available onsite in the event of an accidental spill. Following these precautions, the potential for an accidental chemical or fuel spill occurring and resulting in adverse impacts to soils would be minimal. In additional to a SWPP, a National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Construction Storm Water (CSW) permit would be obtained prior to construction if required (See Section 3.5 for additional discussion regarding NPDES) (NDEQ 2016b).
No significant soil erosion, sedimentation, or contamination is expected to result from the Proposed Action due to the implementation of BMPs, erosion and sediment control measures, and conditions outlined within SWPP and NPDES CSW permit, as needed.

3.5 Hydrology and Water Quality

3.5.1 Definition of the Resource

Water resources are sources of water that are useful or potentially useful to humans. Fresh water resources are essential for many agricultural, industrial, recreational, household, and environmental activities. Fresh water resources are generally divided into ground water or surface water sources.

Groundwater

Groundwater is the water located beneath the surface of the earth, within soil pore spaces, and in the fractures of geologic formations. Groundwater is naturally replenished by surface water from precipitation, streams, and rivers. Groundwater is often used for agricultural, municipal, and industrial uses through the construction of wells.

Surface Water

Surface water is any water that has collected on the ground or contained in a stream, river, lake, wetland, or ocean. Surface water is replenished through precipitation and is naturally depleted through evaporation and subsurface seepage into the groundwater.

Stormwater is surface water from precipitation events. Runoff is created when stormwater cannot be rapidly absorbed by the ground, or falls on impervious surfaces (parking lots, roads, buildings, compacted soils, etc). Runoff can cause many problems, including the erosion of watercourses and flooding. When stormwater creates runoff, pollutants are introduced into surface water and transported.

The Clean Water Act (CWA) (33 USC 1251) regulates discharges of pollutants into the Waters of the United States (WOTUS) by establishing quality standards for surface waters. The CWA makes it unlawful to discharge any pollutant from a point source into navigable waters, unless a permit is obtained. The EPA’s NPDES controls discharges. NPDES regulates the discharge of point (pipe, manufactured ditch, etc) and nonpoint (stormwater) sources of water pollution.

3.5.2 Affected Environment

Groundwater

The Omaha VAMC is located within the Western Interior Plains Aquifer System. This aquifer system underlies most of Kansas, the eastern and southern parts of Nebraska, and a small area in west-central Missouri. It consists of water-yielding dolomite, limestone, and sandstone that are stratigraphically equivalent to aquifers of the Ozark Plateaus Aquifer System. However, in contrast to the Ozark Plateaus system, the Western Interior Plains Aquifer System contains no freshwater.
Little water is withdrawn from the Western Interior Plains Aquifer System because the aquifer system is deeply buried and contains highly mineralized water. Regional groundwater movement in this aquifer system is southeastward to eastward. Much of the water discharges from the aquifer system in the transition zone between the Western Interior Plains and the Ozark Plateaus aquifer systems (USGS 1997).

**Surface Water**

The Omaha VAMC is located within the Big Papillion-Mosquito Watershed and drains into the Missouri River. This watershed contains a portion of seven counties: Douglas, Sarpy, and Washington Counties in Nebraska and Harrison, Mills, Pottawattamie, and Shelby Counties in Iowa. Papillion Creek is a 15.5-mile long tributary of the Missouri River in Nebraska. Its watershed lies in Washington, Douglas, and Sarpy counties, including parts of the city of Omaha and the Omaha VAMC. The main branch of Papillion Creek is known as Big Papillion Creek. Papillion Creek empties into the Missouri River south of Bellevue and just north of the mouth of the Platte River. The location of the Omaha VAMC with respect to nearby surface water resources is shown on Figure 3-4.

According to the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (NDEQ), a number streams and water bodies within the watershed are impaired (NDEQ 2016a). Impaired streams within the vicinity of the Omaha VAMC include the Missouri River, Little Papillion Creek, Big Papillion Creek, Papillion Creek and Cole Creek. Impaired uses include recreation and aquatic life.
3.5.3 Environmental Consequences

3.5.3.1 No-Action Alternative

The No-Action Alternative would have no effect on hydrology or water resources. Existing conditions would be maintained, and no increases in stormwater runoff, erosion, or sedimentation would be expected.

3.5.3.2 Proposed Action

There could be minor, short-term impacts to water resources because of increased stormwater runoff, erosion, and sedimentation due to construction.

To help minimize erosion and sedimentation and to properly manage runoff for both stormwater quantity and quality, BMPs would be implemented pursuant to Nebraska’s stormwater regulatory program rules. These BMPs, including silt fences and temporary sediment traps and basins, would be implemented as appropriate to control erosion and sedimentation (see Section 3.4 for additional discussion regarding erosion and sediment control). In addition, during construction, hazardous materials would be identified and controlled, and any accidental spills would be contained (See Section 3.12 for a more details discussion regarding hazardous materials). Spills from construction activity that may infiltrate the soil, although unlikely, could degrade groundwater quality. If such a spill should occur, the affected area would be attended to immediately and the soil would be removed and disposed of according to NDEQ guidelines and other permit requirements. With the implementation of the BMPs discussed above, construction activities associated with the Proposed Action would not have a significant effect on ground water or surface water resources.

Long-term impacts to water quality are not anticipated. The Proposed Action would result in a net decrease in impermeable surfaces (approximately 44,000 square feet) as the new ACC would be partially built on what currently is an existing parking lot, and sections of Puller Drive and nearby surface parking lots would be converted to green space (see Figure 2-1). As a result, the Proposed Action is expected to decrease storm water runoff from the Omaha VAMC once complete. The Proposed Action is unlikely to result in increases in wastewater discharge from the Omaha VAMC beyond normal growth projections. The Omaha VAMC would coordinate with the City or Omaha and NDEQ to obtain the appropriate NPDES permits for future operation.

3.6 Wildlife, Habitat, and Threatened and Endangered Species

3.6.1 Definition of the Resource

Wildlife

Wildlife includes all non-domesticated plants (flora), animals (fauna), and other organisms.

Habitat

Habitat is the natural environmental of a given species. Habitat can include the physical, biological, and climatic characteristics required for an organism’s survival and reproduction.
Proposed Ambulatory Care Center

NWIHCS Omaha VAMC

January 2018

Threatened and Endangered Species

The Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 USC 1531) prohibits actions that endanger the critical habitat or species of fish, wildlife or plant that is in danger of extinction. The Endangered Species Act also forbids the “taking” (i.e. killing, harming, harassing) of any such species. Threatened and endangered species are listed, and certain rules and regulations restrict actions that will adversely affect such species and their habitats.

3.6.2 Affected Environment

Wildlife

Common wildlife species of Douglas County include song birds, cottontail rabbit, skunk, squirrels, raccoon, deer, and opossum. At the Omaha VAMC, various wildlife species have the potential to be present, dependent on the type of habitat available. The VAMC is in a highly developed area of Omaha, within a high vehicular traffic area. However, the golf course and Field Club Trail abutting the east side of the VAMC property could provide habitat for a variety of wildlife species. Wildlife species likely to be present at the site are typically limited to small mammals, various species of birds, reptiles, and amphibians that are accustomed to living in urban environments.

Habitat

Douglas County is found within the Tallgrass Prairie Ecoregion of Nebraska. Most tallgrass prairie has been heavily grazed or converted for agricultural or urban use in Douglas County. Common tree species of Douglas County include maple, hickory, dogwood, mulberry, plum, cherry, oak, willow, cottonwood, and elm. Typical native and non-native grasses include smooth brome, Kentucky bluegrass, perennial ryegrass, Indian grass, big blue stem, and tall fescue. At the Omaha VAMC the site is mainly urbanized with buildings, parking lots, and sidewalks. The green space that is present is made up of manicured grasses and various ornamental trees and shrubs.

Threatened and Endangered Species

Table 3-4 provides a summary of the federal and state-listed species provided by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the NGPC that are known to be present or could potentially be present in Douglas County. This table includes ten species, including the lake sturgeon (Acipenser fulvescens), river otter (Lontra canadensis), sturgeon chub (Machrybopsis gelida), American ginseng (Panax quinquefolium), interior least tern (Sternula antillarum), pallid sturgeon (Scaphirhynchus albus), piping plover (Charadrius melodus), northern long-eared bat (Myotis septentrionalis), Red Knot (Calidris canutus rufa), and western prairie fringed orchid (Platanthera praeclara).

The American Ginseng, red knot, interior least tern, river otter, piping plover, pallid sturgeon, lake sturgeon, and sturgeon chub are only found along certain water bodies such as the Missouri, Platte, and Elkhorn River which are located well outside of the ESA. The western prairie fringed orchid has the potential to occur within Douglas County; however, there are no known populations within the great Omaha area, and there is no suitable habitat within or adjacent to the ESA (mesic
Table 3-4. Federal and State Listed Species in Douglas County

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Name</th>
<th>Scientific Name</th>
<th>Federal Status</th>
<th>State Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lake Sturgeon</td>
<td>Acipenser fulvescens</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Threatened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interior Least Tern</td>
<td>Sterna antillarum</td>
<td>Endangered</td>
<td>Endangered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piping Plover</td>
<td>Charadrius melodus</td>
<td>Threatened</td>
<td>Threatened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Knot</td>
<td>Calidris canutus rufa</td>
<td>Threatened</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River Otter</td>
<td>Lontra canadensis</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Threatened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sturgeon Chub</td>
<td>Macrhybopsis gelida</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Endangered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Long-eared Bat</td>
<td>Myotis septentrionalis</td>
<td>Threatened</td>
<td>Threatened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pallid Sturgeon</td>
<td>Scaphirhynchus albus</td>
<td>Endangered</td>
<td>Endangered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Ginseng</td>
<td>Panax quinquefolium</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Threatened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Prairie Fringed Orchid</td>
<td>Platanthera praeclara</td>
<td>Threatened</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: USFWS (2017a) and NGPC NHP (2017b)

Northern Long-eared Bat - The northern long-eared bat is a medium-sized bat with a body length of 3 to 3.7 inches but a wingspan of 9 to 10 inches. Their fur color can be medium to dark brown on the back and tawny to pale-brown on the underside. As its name suggests, this bat is distinguished by its long ears, particularly as compared to other bats in its genus, Myotis.

Figure 3-5 provides a distribution map for the northern long-eared bat within Nebraska. This species does have the potential to be present at the Omaha VAMC due to being within the species range and having trees on site to provide potential maternity roosting habitat.
Environmental Consequences

3.6.3.1 No-Action Alternative

Wildlife

Under the No-Action Alternative, the Proposed Action would not be implemented at the Omaha VAMC. Therefore, no construction would take place and there would be no impacts to wildlife species, migratory birds, or their habitats. Animals inhabiting buildings, such as bats, rodents, insects, and small mammals would continue to remain mostly undisturbed. There would be no new effects on wildlife or wildlife habitat.

Habitat

Under the No-Action Alternative, construction activities would not occur and there would be no additional impacts to any habitat at the Omaha VAMC campus. Existing disturbances such as mowing and grounds maintenance, and foot and vehicular traffic would continue.

Threatened and Endangered Species

The No-Action Alternative would have no effect on any threatened or endangered species. Construction activities would not occur, and site conditions would remain unchanged.
3.6.3.2 Proposed Action

Wildlife

Under the Proposed Action Alternative, a new ACC would be constructed on an existing parking lot and green space at the Omaha VAMC. All of the work would be on existing VAMC property, limiting direct and indirect impacts to nearby habitats that support local, non-listed, wildlife species and migratory birds.

It is estimated that project may require the removal of approximately 10 trees and would impact manicured lawns. These areas may be used to a limited degree by small mammals, reptiles, and various songbirds; however, it is unlikely that these species reside on the premises or breed within the developed portion of the VAMC. Impacts to wildlife due to the loss of these areas would be minimal. Furthermore, most species that would use the area (if not all) are highly mobile. Individuals that feel threatened or bothered by any of the proposed activities would likely relocate to adjacent areas. Therefore, potential impacts to wildlife and migratory birds due to implementing the Proposed Action Alternative would be minimal and short-term.

Habitat

Construction activities would entail the use of heavy machinery, trucks, and trailers. Construction activities would necessitate removal of vegetation surrounding work areas, primarily manicured lawns, but also trees or shrubs located very close to the project site. Impacts would occur in previously disturbed areas and adverse impacts to habitat would be minimal. Following completion of all construction and demolition activities, all disturbed areas would be reseeded or re-vegetated and erosion control BMPs would be maintained until the vegetation is fully reestablished.

Threatened and Endangered Species

The Proposed Action would not impact threatened and endangered species at the Omaha VAMC or adjacent properties (See Appendix A, NGPC response letter dated November 6, 2017 and USFWS response letter dated November 30, 2017,). The Omaha VAMC will continue consultation with the USFWS and NGPC as needed to ensure the Proposed Action will not jeopardize the continued existence of any threatened or endangered species, or adversely modify critical habitat.

Tree removal would be conducted outside the maternity roosting season for the northern long-eared bat (June 1 to July 31) and for the migratory bird nesting season (April 1 to July 15). If tree removal cannot be avoided outside these seasons, then surveys would be conducted by a qualified biologist to determine if these species are present. If found, coordination with the USFWS and NGPC would be initiated to determine an appropriate course of action (Appendix A).
3.7 Noise

3.7.1 Definition of the Resource

Noise pollution is typified by distracting, irritating, or damaging sounds that are freely audible. Sounds are generally considered noise pollution if they adversely affect wildlife, natural processes, human activity or health, or are capable of damaging physical structures.

The prevailing source of artificial noise pollution is from transportation. In rural areas, train, airplane, and vehicle noise can disturb wildlife habits, potentially affecting hunting, mating, and social behaviors. In urban areas, traffic noise can cause sleep disruption in humans and animals, hearing loss, increases in stress, and decreases in productivity. Construction activities, entertainment districts, and industrial facilities are additional sources of noise pollution commonly found in urban settings.

The Noise Control Act (NCA) of 1972 established a national policy to promote an environment for all citizens that is free from noise that jeopardizes their health and welfare (42 USC 4901). The NCA established mechanisms of setting emission standards for sources of noise, including motor vehicles, aircraft, certain types of Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) equipment, and major appliances. The EPA has established noise guidelines and to protect citizens from potential hearing damage and other adverse physiological, psychological, and social effects associated with noise; however, noise is typically regulated at the state and local level. In general, the NCA established that noise levels in exceedance of 55 decibels (dBA) outdoors and 45 dBA indoors are likely to cause interference and annoyance. Furthermore, continued exposure to noise levels in exceedance of 70 dBA can cause hearing loss.

3.7.2 Affected Environment

The primary sources of noise at the Omaha VAMC include pedestrian and vehicular traffic, deliveries, grounds maintenance, and the operation of facility equipment including HVAC and power generation. Sensitive receptors that are located near the Omaha VAMC include nearby churches, golf course, trail, and surrounding residential areas. In addition, noise generated at the Omaha VAMC has the potential to affect the patient experience at the Omaha VAMC main hospital building and nearby Douglas County Health Center.

3.7.3 Environmental Consequences

3.7.3.1 No-Action Alternative

Under the No-Action Alternative, ambient noise levels would remain unchanged near the Omaha VAMC. Routine facility operations, vehicle traffic, and construction activities from other projects near the Omaha VAMC campus would continue to generate noise.

3.7.3.2 Proposed Action

Implementation of the Proposed Action would not involve the long-term operation of significant noise-generating sources, nor would it increase or alter the existing levels of the primary noise sources near the Omaha VAMC campus. However, due to construction-related activities, there
would be a temporary increase in localized noise generated during construction of the new ACC and associated facilities.

Noise effects to workers may require the use of hearing protection equipment. The Proposed Action would require the use of heavy equipment for clearing, leveling, construction, and demolition activities. Heavy equipment commonly produces noise levels ranging from 70 to 95 dBA at a distance of 50 feet. Noise impacts to Omaha VAMC users and nearby residents are expected to occur only during daylight hours and are expected to be minor. Measures would be implemented if needed to mitigate noise impacts during construction activities. These measures may include limiting specific construction activities to certain times of day, designating construction access areas and roads, and using barriers or noise dampening mats, among other methods. Construction noise levels would be reduced to low or none during nighttime hours.

3.8 Land Use
3.8.1 Definition of the Resource

Land use refers to natural land uses and land uses that reflect human modification. Natural land use classifications include wildlife areas, forests, and other open or undeveloped areas. Human land uses include residential, commercial, industrial, utilities, agricultural, recreational, and other developed uses. Management plans, policies, ordinances, and regulations determine the types of uses that are allowable, or protect specially designated or environmentally sensitive uses.

3.8.2 Affected Environment

The Omaha VAMC campus dates to approximately 1950, when the hospital was designed and constructed as a 500-bed general medical facility. Since 1950, there have been two major additions: (1) a research building in 1975, and (2) an outpatient addition in 1987. The campus includes additional support facilities, a physical plant, green space, and surface parking patients, visitors, and staff.

The Omaha VAMC campus is in an urban setting within the City of Omaha. The campus abuts a golf course and public trail on the east, the Douglas County Health Department and Health Center to the north, residences of the Morton Meadows neighborhood on the west, and the Hanscom Park neighborhood and a major retail and commercial corridor along Center Street to the south (see Figure 1-2).

The entire ESA is currently zoned for General Office uses (see Figure 3-6).
3.8.3 Environmental Consequences

3.8.3.1 No-Action Alternative
The No-Action Alternative would have no effect on land use. The Omaha VAMC campus is currently consistent with City of Omaha zoning regulations.

3.8.3.2 Proposed Action
Implementation of the Proposed Action would not result in any short or long-term negative impacts to land use with the ESA or adjacent areas. Land use within the Omaha VAMC campus due to the Proposed Action would generally remain unchanged. The new ACC, parking, and greenspace would be constructed entirely within the Omaha VAMC property boundary and would be consistent with existing facilities and infrastructure, providing needed modernization and expansion of existing facilities. Land use adjacent to the ESA would be unaffected by the project.

The Proposed Action would be consistent with current City of Omaha zoning regulations (See Figure 3-6).

3.9 Floodplains and Wetlands

3.9.1 Definition of the Resource

Floodplains
According to Executive Order (EO) 11988, Floodplain Management, a floodplain is defined as:

“the lowland and relatively flat areas adjoining inland and coastal waters including flood prone areas of offshore islands, including a minimum, that area subject to a one percent or greater chance of flooding in any given year.”

EO 11988 requires federal agencies to avoid the long and short-term adverse effects associated with the occupancy and modification of floodplains. In addition, this EO requires agencies to avoid direct and indirect support of floodplain development whenever there is a practicable alternative (44 CFR 26951).

Wetlands
A wetland is an area with sufficient hydrology to support hydrophytic (water-loving) vegetation and the development hydric soils by creating anoxic (without oxygen) below-ground conditions. Wetlands include swamps, marshes, bogs, etc. Wetlands are extremely biologically diverse and can support a wide variety of plant and animal life. Wetlands are beneficial in that they improve water quality, store floodwater, provide fish and wildlife habitat, are aesthetically pleasing, and are biologically productive.

Section 404 of the CWA established a program to regulate the discharge of dredged or fill in WOTUS, including wetlands. Activities in WOTUS regulated under this program include fill for
development, water resource projects, and infrastructure development. Section 404 requires a permit before dredged or fill material may be discharged into WOTUS (33 USC 1344).

EO 11990, Protection of Wetlands, requires federal agencies to minimize the destruction, loss, or degradation of wetlands, and to preserve and enhance the natural and beneficial values of wetlands. It also requires that agencies avoid construction in wetlands, to the extent practicable (44 CFR 26951).

3.9.2 Affected Environment

Floodplains
The Omaha VAMC campus is not located within a known mapped floodplain or floodway (Federal Emergency Management Agency [FEMA] Panel 31055C0351H). FEMA indicates that the vicinity of the Omaha VAMC contains “no special flood hazard areas” (FEMA Panel 31055C0351H). The ESA is not adjacent or within close proximity to a known waterbody (FEMA 2005).

Wetlands
The USFWS maintains a National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) that provides information on the characteristics, extent, and status of the nation’s wetlands and deep-water habitats (USFWS 2017b). According to this data, there are no wetlands or waters on Omaha VAMC grounds or adjacent the Omaha VAMC. During a site survey on October 20, 2017, wetland vegetation was observed in a stormwater detention basin on the eastern edge of the ESA near the Field Club Trail and parking lot (Figure 3-7). No other potential wetland areas were found during the site visit at the Omaha VAMC.

3.9.3 Environmental Consequences

3.9.3.1 No-Action Alternative

Floodplains
The No-Action Alternative would have no impact to floodplains. The Omaha VAMC campus is not located within a mapped floodplain or floodway (FEMA 2005), and is not adjacent or in close proximity to any surface waterbody.

Wetlands
Under the No-Action Alternative, there would be no impact to wetlands. There would be no modification to any existing structures, no construction of new structures, and no excavation or fill activities that would potentially impact wetlands. Therefore, no impacts to wetlands would result from implementation of the No-Action Alternative.

3.9.3.2 Proposed Action

Floodplains
The Proposed Action would have no impact to floodplains. The Omaha VAMC campus is not located within a known floodplain or floodway (FEMA 2005) and is not adjacent or in close proximity to any surface waterbody.
Wetlands

The Proposed Action would not involve any dredge or fill activities in wetlands and would have no direct impact on federal or state jurisdictional waters. Pending coordination with United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) pursuant to Section 404 of the CWA, it is anticipated that the Proposed Action would likely be a “no permit required” activity (Appendix A).

3.10 Socioeconomic

3.10.1 Definition of the Resource

This section discusses social and economic aspects of the ESA and surrounding community, including population and employment, community facilities and characteristics, and the existing business climate.

3.10.2 Affected Environment

Population

The VAMC is located within Omaha, Nebraska, in Douglas County. In 2010, Omaha had a population of 408,958 as of the 2010 U.S. Census (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). The median population age is 33.5 with 70.3 percent of the population aged 18 years and older. The 2010 U.S. Census Bureau showed that Omaha is a growing city with about 4.9 percent growth between 2000 and 2010, from 390,007 people to 408,958. The City's growth rate was below that of Douglas County (11.5 percent) and Nebraska (6.7 percent) (U.S. Census Bureau 2010 and 2000).

The 2015 American Community Survey (ACS) estimated a veteran population of 27,331. Approximately 34 percent of these veterans are Vietnam era veterans, 17.7 percent serving in the Gulf War from 1990 to 2001, and 14.3 percent serving in Gulf Wars after 2001. Approximately 91 percent of these veterans are male. An estimated 25 percent of veterans in the Omaha area have a disability (U.S. Census Bureau 2015).

Employment

As of September 2017, the Omaha-Council Bluffs metropolitan statistical area alone provided a labor force of 470,565 workers, about 2.6 percent of which were unemployed; Douglas County's workforce was 291,657 with an unemployment rate of 2.7 percent. These unemployment rates are slightly higher than the Nebraska state average of 2.5 percent, but lower than the national average of 4.2 percent (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2017). Government provided the largest source of employment in the metropolitan area in 2010, with health care, social assistance and retail trade serving as the largest private employment sectors (Bureau of Economic Analysis 2017).

2010 Census data indicates that approximately 91.6 percent of the 177,510 housing units in the City of Omaha were occupied. Approximately 14,891 units were vacant. Of these vacant units, approximately 52.8 percent (7,862 units) were available for rent and roughly 13.0 percent (1,931 units) were available for sale.
Health and Safety

The Omaha Police Department provides crime prevention, law enforcement, and public safety services for the areas surrounding the Omaha VAMC. The city has four police precincts and 73 patrol districts: Northeast Precinct at 30th and Taylor, Northwest Precinct at 103rd Street north of Fort Street, Southeast Precinct at 25th and Vinton, and Southwest Precinct at 99th and M Street. The Omaha VAMC is within the Southeast Precinct, which has 17 patrol districts (Omaha Police 2017).

The Omaha Fire Department (OFD) has 24 fire stations throughout Omaha, providing fire prevention education, emergency medical response coordination, hazardous materials response, and a mass casualty decontamination services. In addition to performing normal duties of truck and engine companies, the OFD also responds to high angle rescue, confined space rescue, and trench rescue (OFD 2017). The Fire Department Emergency Medical Services Bureau Chief coordinates medic unit response with all Class II emergency rooms and their medical directors. Medic units, along with Emergency Response Teams Airworthiness Directive and Advanced Life Support engine companies, are manned on a 24-hour basis. Additional responsibilities include all administrative, equipment, liaison and training functions. This bureau also oversees the Department's Infectious Disease Control program (OFD 2017).

Within the Greater Omaha area, there are 15 hospitals including Nebraska’s only Children’s Hospital and Medical Center. The University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) is a research facility with programs in bioterrorism response, cancer research and transplantation. Catholic Health initiatives (CHI) has five locations in the metropolitan area, and Methodist Health System has several facilities. The City of Council Bluffs has two, full-service hospitals – CHI Mercy Council Bluffs and Jennie Edmundson Hospital, as well as numerous specialized clinics (Greater Omaha Area Economic Development Partnership 2017).

The Omaha VAMC exclusively serves the Omaha and Council Bluff’s Veteran community’s medical needs. The VA Health Care System also operates seven clinics located in Bellevue, Lincoln, Grand Island, Holdrege, Norfolk, North Platte, and O’Neill, Nebraska, and another clinic located in Shenandoah, Iowa. These clinics offer a variety of services ranging from primary care, limited specialty care, mental health services, laboratory work, prescriptions, and optometry services. Most specialty care providers at these clinics refer patients to the Omaha VAMC. The Omaha VAMC is the only center with a full-service hospital located between Denver, Colorado; Des Moines, Iowa; Sioux Falls, South Dakota; and Leavenworth, Kansas. The Omaha VAMC does not have a full-service emergency room and relies on the UNMC.

3.10.3 Environmental Consequences

3.10.3.1 No-Action Alternative

The No-Action Alternative would have no significant impacts on social cohesion, economic vitality or opportunities. There would be no change to the community services provided by the Omaha VAMC from the existing conditions under implementation of the No-Action Alternative. Ambulatory Care functions would remain scattered throughout the main hospital building. Under the No-Action
Alternative, spaces would remain fragmented and unsuitably configured for patient flow, staff efficiency, and sharing of equipment and services.

However, the No-Action Alternative would likely result in increased delay and inefficiencies of care for the veteran community. The existing facility at the Omaha VAMC is incompatible with the PHMC and PACT models of care and would continue to limit patient care and satisfaction. Limited patient care and satisfaction would likely contribute to a limited quality of life for the veteran community and may impact the veteran community’s ability to contribute to the economic vitality of the Greater Omaha area.

Police and fire emergency service would not change in relation to the No-Action Alternative. Omaha Police and Fire Departments would be expected to serve the community in the same manner.

3.10.3.2 Proposed Action

Project construction would have a minor short-term beneficial impact on the economy and employment in Omaha due to temporary employment of local and/or out-of-state construction contractors. Impacts to emergency services such as fire and police response may need to be mitigated for during construction of the ACC’s associated walkway and closure of Puller Drive. After construction, emergency services would likely access the primary Omaha VAMC facility via a reconstructed access point on Puller Drive.

Long-term impacts of the Proposed Action would be beneficial, allowing for compliance with the VA preferred models of care and addressing space deficiencies identified for Ambulatory Care at the Omaha VAMC. Construction of the ACC would result in a beneficial impact to the overall functionality of the Omaha VAMC by consolidating ACC services and creating better intra-service relationships. Construction of the ACC would allow the Omaha VAMC to provide PHMC and PACT models of care and would likely increase patient satisfaction. Increased patient care and satisfaction would likely contribute to an enhanced quality of life for the veteran community. An increased quality of life would likely increase the veteran community’s ability to contribute to the economic vitality of the Greater Omaha area.

No reduction of services provided by the Omaha VAMC would result from implementation of the Proposed Action. Alternatively, construction of the ACC would enhance the community services provided by the Omaha VAMC, as well as increase the efficiency of these services.

No change is expected to police and fire services provided to the Omaha VAMC and surrounding community due to construction of the Proposed Action. During construction, the Omaha VAMC should coordinate with these service providers to make them aware of potential access changes due to construction and the closure of Puller Drive after construction.