

VAAC Recommendation Resolution Background and Supporting Evidence/Statements

Recommendation #1 – Allocate funds to hire at least one trained Case Worker specializing in Veteran issues.

Examples of Job Duties -

Provide Individualized Support:

- Offer personalized assistance to Veterans in navigating the often complex and bureaucratic systems related to housing programs, healthcare access, transportation solutions, and other critical services.
- Develop tailored action plans for Veterans based on their specific needs, circumstances, and eligibility for benefits or services.
- Advocate on behalf of Veterans to resolve barriers or delays they may encounter when accessing support.

Identify and Secure Grant Opportunities:

- Research and apply for grant funding at local, state, and federal levels to enhance and expand the resources available for the Veteran community.
- Collaborate with city departments and non-profit organizations to identify innovative solutions for long-term support, such as affordable housing initiatives, mental health programs, and transportation projects.
- Assist in grant compliance and reporting to ensure the sustainability of programs benefiting Veterans.

Monitor and Assess Needs:

- Maintain records and data on Veterans' service usage and unmet needs to identify trends and inform future planning and advocacy efforts.
- Provide regular updates and recommendations to the City Council and relevant stakeholders to address emerging issues in the Veteran community.

Promote Awareness and Outreach:

- Organize informational sessions, workshops, and outreach campaigns to raise awareness of available services and benefits for Veterans and their families.
- Foster a welcoming environment where Veterans feel comfortable seeking help and accessing resources.

Recommendation #2 - Explore, coordinate and implement transportation solutions to ensure reliable and equitable access for Veterans traveling to and from VA health appointments in the Austin-San Antonio corridor.

- Awaiting results from 2024 Transportation Survey

- See **Bridging the Gap: Public Transportation for Veterans in Hays County to VA Facilities** – prepared by Amanda Gomes Torres. Ms. Gomez Torres is a Marine Corp Veteran and Graduate Social Work Student at Texas State University who also serves as the Case Manager for Hope 4 Hays County Veterans through the Hays County Veterans Service Office. Amanda represented the Hays County Veterans Service Office in place of Council Member Jude Prather on the VAAC. Policy Alternatives should include collaboration with regional transit authorities to establish a dedicated public transportation route connecting Hays County to VA facilities in San Antonio, Austin, and New Braunfels. This could include:
 - Scheduled buses or shuttles operating on fixed routes.
 - Partnerships with local transit providers for discounted Veteran fares.
 - Integration of ride-share services for Veterans in remote areas.

Recommendation #3 - Establish a dedicated budget for essential repairs, improvements, and ongoing maintenance of the Hays County Veterans Memorial to preserve its infrastructure, safety, and historical significance for future generations.

Historical Information:

- The Hays County Veterans Memorial was established by volunteers who raised funds for the design and construction of the memorial. The City of San Marcos granted permission for it to be placed at its current location where it officially opened to the public in 2003. . In 2009 the Veteran Affairs Advisory Committee was created and tasked with overseeing the transfer of operations from the volunteer group to the city. The city officially began processing plaque orders and completing any maintenance needs 2011.
- The Parks and Recreation Department has absorbed the maintenance cost into their regular Park Operations Maintenance where it competes with all other maintenance needs throughout the park system.
- Local resident Terry Norris organized a group of volunteers who completed some minor repairs and painting on the memorial in 2022.
- The memorial is currently in need of tile/grout repairs and improvements to the landscaping. Repairs are needed to ensure the structural integrity of memorial for years to come. Improvements are needed to provide shade for visitors, addition of a Space Force Medallion, and expansion plans for developing the back side of the memorial (sidewalks, landscaping, etc.)
- The committee is interested in a fundraising campaign but will need council approval to undertake such an endeavor.

Recommendation #4 – Seek financial support from Hays County to enhance efforts to meet the needs of Veterans and to maintain the Hays County Veterans Memorial as a symbol of collective respect and remembrance.

Historical:

- The Hays County Veterans Memorial was created to honor Veterans throughout Hays County. The Veteran Affairs Advisory Committee recommends that City Council should engage in conversations

with County Officials to seek cooperation with the ongoing maintenance and improvement to the memorial.