

[Butler Eagle](#)

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BUTLER TWP — Construction is about to begin on a new \$8.5 million residential domiciliary on the VA Butler Healthcare campus.

When complete, the project will include a treatment center and four apartment buildings to house up to 56 veterans who are either homeless or suffer from substance abuse or mental illness.

"The new domiciliary will enable us to better meet the needs of those veterans in need of residential treatment now and in the future, providing state-of-the-art care in a state-of-the-art facility," said VA Butler Healthcare director, Patricia Nealon.

The new buildings will replace the current domiciliary, which was built in the 1930s or 1940s, said health systems specialist Ken Kalberer.

The existing facility, which also accommodates 56 people, is "not modern or comfortable for residential use. And it's expensive to maintain because of its age," Kalberer said.

The construction beginning now is on the first of two phases: the treatment center and two, 12-person multistory apartment buildings.

The second phase will include two additional apartment style buildings with 16 bedrooms each and therapeutic gardens.

A dozen beds within the project will be dedicated to female veterans.

The new domiciliary will be constructed on the 88-acre campus behind the main building on the site of the former ballfield.

The project was designed by Radelet McCarthy Polletta Architects and Interior Designers of Pittsburgh. The contract for the first phase was awarded to R.A. Glancy and Sons of Gibsonia.

The entire project should be completed within 18 to 24 months, Kalberer said.

Funding for the first phase is in-hand. But a portion of the anticipated funding from Congress for the second phase almost came into jeopardy Wednesday night.

An amendment had been proposed to the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act, which is the bill carrying the construction funding, that would have eliminated the needed money.

But the money was put back into the bill after Rep. Jason Altmire, D-4th, rallied for it.

"I know how important this new domiciliary is to Western Pennsylvania veterans and that is why I fought hard to ensure that it receives the funding that it was promised," Altmire said in a written statement. "Because our efforts to protect this funding were successful, Butler VA Healthcare will be able to continue building this wonderful new facility and improving care for our local heroes."

The Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act passed the House by a vote of 411 to 6 and still must pass the Senate before it can be signed into law.

When the domiciliary project is completed, officials at VA Healthcare will do a study to determine the best use of the current domiciliary building.

Kalberer said it is possible a new program could be offered there. The building could be utilized by a different agency. Or, it could be demolished.

