

# *Veterans* **Strategic Plan**

*Long Beach City Council Meeting  
March 15, 2022*





# Long Beach Veterans Commission

---



*Ryan Antes, **Chair***

*Josh "Smitty" Smith, **Vice Chair***

*Jesse Blanco*

*Sylvia Contreras*

*Juanita Doplemore*

*Ricky Fernandez*

*Gus Orozco*

*Lance Santiago*

*Mike Shaknovich*

# Methodologies and Sources of Data

1. Structured and informal interviews with 46 key Veterans' community stakeholders
2. Literature Review on the challenges and opportunities Veterans face
3. Demographic data research and analysis
4. Community Input Sessions held at places where Veterans gather – engaged nearly 200 Veterans
5. Commissioners and their experiences, knowledge and deep involvement in the Veterans' community





# Goal 1

*Long Beach recognizes Veterans for their strengths, as valued members of our community, and regularly celebrates and honors them.*

Implement the following recognition opportunities:

1. Light pole banners program
2. Interactive digital map that tells the stories behind the City's parks named for Veterans, and Vet-related monuments and public art
3. Veterans Work Detail program - volunteer service opportunities for Veterans (e.g., beach clean-ups, park improvement projects)
4. New forms of celebrating Veterans - multi-generational values and interests bringing Veterans and non-Veterans together



*“ I don't want to be honored with hoopla. I don't need a plaque or parade. I want a purpose or a project. I want a job to do. ”*

## Goal 2

---



***Veteran-serving organizations and agencies coordinate well to ensure that Veterans successfully transition from military service to civilian life.***

---

1. Establish mechanisms to connect and coordinate local organizations that provide transition-related resources and services for Veterans.
2. Start with a summit that brings local organizations together to envision a more coordinated response.
3. Focus on organizations that address employment, workforce development, education, mental and physical health and well-being.



# Goal 3

---

***Veterans readily access the resources and services they need in the areas of housing, education, employment, and mental and physical health and well-being post-transition and throughout their lifetimes.***

---

1. Lead a summit that brings local providers of resources and services throughout Veterans' lives (post-transition).
2. Ensure services and supports are accessible to underserved Veteran populations (LGBTQ, women, seniors, low-income, Veterans with disabilities).
3. Bring together organizations and agencies that focus on Veterans mental health and suicide prevention to explore options for improving access for Veterans under 40.

Veterans under 40 have suicide rates nearly 3X higher than the non-Veterans population.



***“It was refreshing to engage with other service providers, and we need to communicate with each other more often.”***



*To accomplish both Goals 2 and 3, which focus on improving access to resources and services at transition, and throughout Veterans' lifetimes:*

---



Leverage an existing technology platform such as **Unite Us** as a knowledge base to connect local Veterans to the resources and services they need more quickly.

Local organizations join the platform to communicate with each other to pinpoint what services a Veteran needs, refer them to the provider, and to track the outcomes.

*“ Websites connect people to information, not to people. They can point you in the right direction, but you still have to dig around to get connected to an actual person who can help you with what you need. ”*



# Goal 4

---

*Veterans who are precariously housed or who are experiencing homelessness have access to affordable housing and the supportive services they need to remain housed.*

---

1. Coordinate with the City's housing and homeless services providers to make and support policy recommendations that increase access to affordable housing and prevent homelessness.
2. Support innovative strategies programs and policies to reduce barriers to housing Veterans.





# Goal 5

---

***An Office of Veterans Support is established in the Health and Human Services Department to serve as the infrastructure to carry out the goals, objectives and strategies outlined in the strategic plan.***

---

1. Plans, oversees and manages the City's efforts to uplift and support Veterans
2. Coordinates City-wide efforts to recognize Veterans
3. Connects Veterans to resources and services
4. Engages local organizations and agencies that serve Veterans communicate, collaborate and coordinate well
5. Connects Veterans to employment, job training, and career-building opportunities
6. Connects Veterans to volunteer opportunities including Veteran-to-Veteran support programs
7. Develops the referral platform, Unite Us, for Veterans
8. Establishes a Veterans resource warm line
9. Acts as a clearing house of information on "all things Veterans" in Long Beach
10. Collects and disseminates Veterans' demographic data for the City of Long Beach



# *Thank you*

**Kelly Colopy**

*Director*

Health and Human Services Department

**Gina Overholt**

*Veteran Commission Program Manager*

Health and Human Services Department