

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

historic name Louisville Veterans Administration Hospital

other names/site number Robley Rex VA Medical Center/ JFEG-1657

Related Multiple Property Third Generation Veterans Hospitals MPS

2. Location

street & number 800 Zorn Avenue

NA

 not for publication

city or town Louisville

NA

 vicinity

state Kentucky code KY county Jefferson code 111 zip code 40206

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A B C D

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government _____

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official Craig Potts, SHPO Date _____

State Historic Preservation Officer Kentucky Heritage Council/State Historic Preservation Office
Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

 entered in the National Register determined eligible for the National Register
 determined not eligible for the National Register removed from the National Register
 other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper _____ Date of Action _____

Louisville Veterans Administration Hospital

Jefferson County, Kentucky

Name of Property

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

☐ private
☐ public - Local
☐ public - State
☒ public - Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

☐ building(s)
☒ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
13	3	buildings
		district
		site
	1	structure
		object
13	4	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

Third Generation Veterans Hospitals MPS

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

HEALTH CARE/hospital

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

HEALTH CARE/hospital

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

International Style

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Concrete

walls: Metal/steel

Brick

roof: _____

other: _____

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Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

The Louisville Veterans Administration Hospital (JFEG-1657), now the Robley Rex Veterans Affairs Medical Center, is located in northeastern Louisville, Kentucky on Zorn Avenue. The hospital consists of a historic campus of one monolithic hospital structure surrounded by ancillary buildings that host numerous support facilities for the healthcare of veterans. The main hospital building is nine stories tall with a small penthouse, clad predominately in brick, with the first floor exterior in limestone along the primary facade. The primary façade retains its historic character, with later additions clustered at the rear of the structure. The outbuildings also retain their historic character, even if their uses have long since changed. The main hospital building sits prominently on campus. The cluster of buildings formerly used for residential purposes are removed from the healthcare activities and located to the northeast of the hospital buildings, while the support functions, such as the laundry and boiler house, are organized to the southwest behind the main hospital building. Extensive planned landscaping at the Louisville VA hospital is minimal, as many of the former open spaces have been given over to large surface parking lots. The hospital campus encompasses 58 acres. This nomination proposes the listing of 58 acres, a district with 13 contributing buildings, 3 non-contributing buildings, and 1 non-contributing structure.



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Site Development

The Zorn Avenue location had been the site of a reservoir in the 1850s that provided water to the citizens of Louisville for about twenty years but was no longer able to meet the demand caused by the town's population growth by 1879. By 1899, a local country club utilized the property, including converting the old reservoir into a swimming pool, constructing a clubhouse, and making other improvements. The country club consolidated with another organization and moved to another location, but continued to use the swimming pool until the property became the site of summer camping for the local Boy Scout troops. In 1922, the Boy Scouts found better facilities, leaving the swimming pool and other facilities to fall into disrepair. Efforts were made to convert the property into a major park facility that would include world-class tennis facilities, but the project was not completed. The site remained without a designated use, other than "nighttime activities of a more informal nature," until the construction of the VA hospital.¹

Initially the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers signed a contract with S. Hannaford & Sons and E. T. Hutchings to construct the Louisville hospital.² S. Hannaford & Sons, a well known architectural firm out of Cincinnati, had been responsible for the Cincinnati Music Hall, City Hall, and various churches and residences throughout the city.³ E. T. Hutchings served as the local partner, an architectural firm based in Louisville responsible for Nichols General Hospital for the Army, as well as various schools and residential structures in Louisville. The contract was estimated at around \$14 million.⁴ However, before the two architecture firms could complete the job, the VA sought to make budgetary reductions, as construction estimates came in at much higher amounts than anticipated. As a result, the VA shifted from hospitals designed by architects in private practice to utilizing standard plans developed in-house by VA architectural staff. Louisville was one of the hospitals built based on this standardized plan on the previously selected Zorn Avenue site. To further trim costs, VA elected to reduce the number of beds from 750 to about 500. Upon completion, the final hospital construction cost was approximately \$8 million.⁵

¹Lee Heiman, "The Story of a Hill," *The Courier-Journal Magazine* (Louisville), 17 July 1949, 5-9.

² List of Architect-Engineers and Construction Contractors, Veterans Hospital Construction Program, Hospital Branch, Construction Operations Division, Office of the Chief of Engineers, Record Group 15, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC. Gordon, Stephen C. and Elisabeth H. Tuttle, *Samuel Hannaford & Sons Thematic Resources in Hamilton County*, National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places, 3 March 1980.

³ Gordon, Stephen C. and Elisabeth H. Tuttle, *Samuel Hannaford & Sons Thematic Resources in Hamilton County*, National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places, 3 March 1980.

⁴ E. T. Hutchings, "Questionnaire for Architects' Roster and/or Register of Architect Qualified for Federal Public Works, American Institute of Architects, 1947, <http://communities.aia.org/sites/hdoaa/wiki/Wiki%20Pages/Find%20Names.aspx> (October 2010).

⁵ 25th Anniversary, *VA Hospital, Louisville, Kentucky*, (n.p., 1977), 14, Office of Public Affairs, Robley Rex VAMC, Louisville, Kentucky; Resolution Adopted by the Federal Board of Hospitalization, 21 December 1945, Geographic Files 1919-1959, Department of Medicine and Surgery, Veterans Administration, Record Group 15, A1, Entry 64, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.

Louisville Veterans Administration Hospital

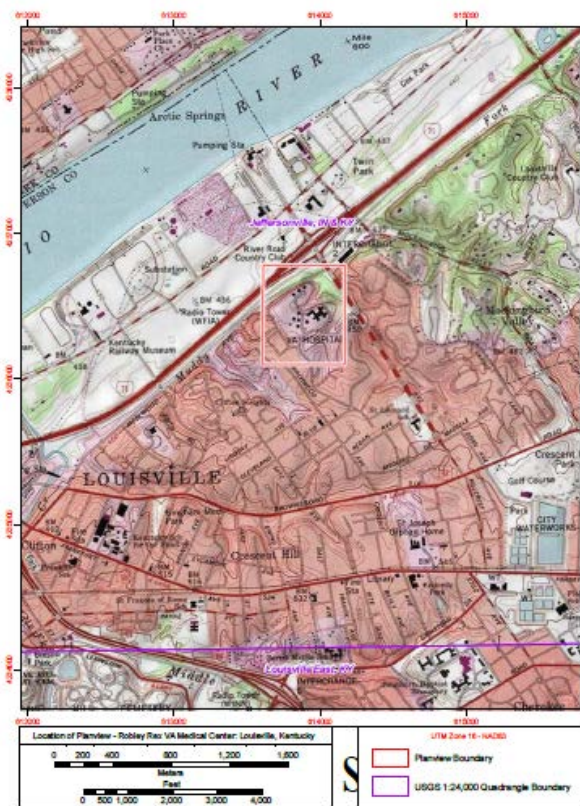
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After groundbreaking in 1948, construction started in 1949 but ground to a halt when a steel strike slowed production of the necessary material. By April of 1952, the doors had opened and patients were relocated from the Nichols hospital to the new VA hospital. On April 20, 1952, the Louisville Veterans Administration Medical Center (VAMC) held its formal dedication. The hospital was classified as a general medical and surgical hospital, but VA had designated it a “specialized treatment center for neurosurgery, thoracic surgery, tumors and medical neurology.”⁶ At the time of the opening, the Louisville VAMC was lauded as featuring the “latest...in hospital design and equipment of the most modern type.”⁷



Opened in 1952, the Louisville Veterans Administration Hospital was constructed as part of a nationwide building campaign instituted by the Veterans Administration (VA) to provide modern healthcare to returning World War II veterans. When the Louisville VA Hospital was still in planning stages, VA opted to no longer retain private architecture firms for design services, thus implementing a VA-developed standard plan for its new hospitals, including the one in Louisville. As a result, the Louisville VA Hospital appears practically identical to other VA hospitals of this period, such as those facilities located in Cincinnati, Ohio and Ann Arbor, Michigan. These hospitals all feature a prominent main hospital building, housing the majority of the medical services for veterans, with ancillary functions, such as staff housing, storage, and power, clustered in smaller buildings on the same campus. These hospitals rejected the revival architectural

⁶ Harry Shaw, “What the New V.A. Hospital is Like,” *The Courier-Journal Magazine* (Louisville), 20 April 1952, 16.

⁷ Shaw, 16.

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styles popular with earlier Veterans hospitals in favor of streamlined, unadorned buildings, often clad in red brick. These new facilities were located in proximity to major urban centers, not only to facilitate care for the greatest number of veterans, but also to create research and staffing links with local medical schools.

Changes also have been made to the overall site, typical of alterations made to VA hospitals of this era. The hospital does not feature elaborate landscaping nor is it organized around a central courtyard, as commonly found in VA hospitals constructed in earlier times. A flagpole is located adjacent to the main entrance, as traditionally found at VA facilities, but it has been relocated from its original location. The proliferation of cars has necessitated the construction of additional parking lots, but VA elected to build surface parking areas rather than a large multi-story garage. Structures that once were living quarters for staff have now become offices, but their overall appearance has changed little from the period of construction with the exception of the construction of a hyphen joining Buildings #3 and #4. One historic outbuilding, a staff garage, has been demolished. (see plan below).

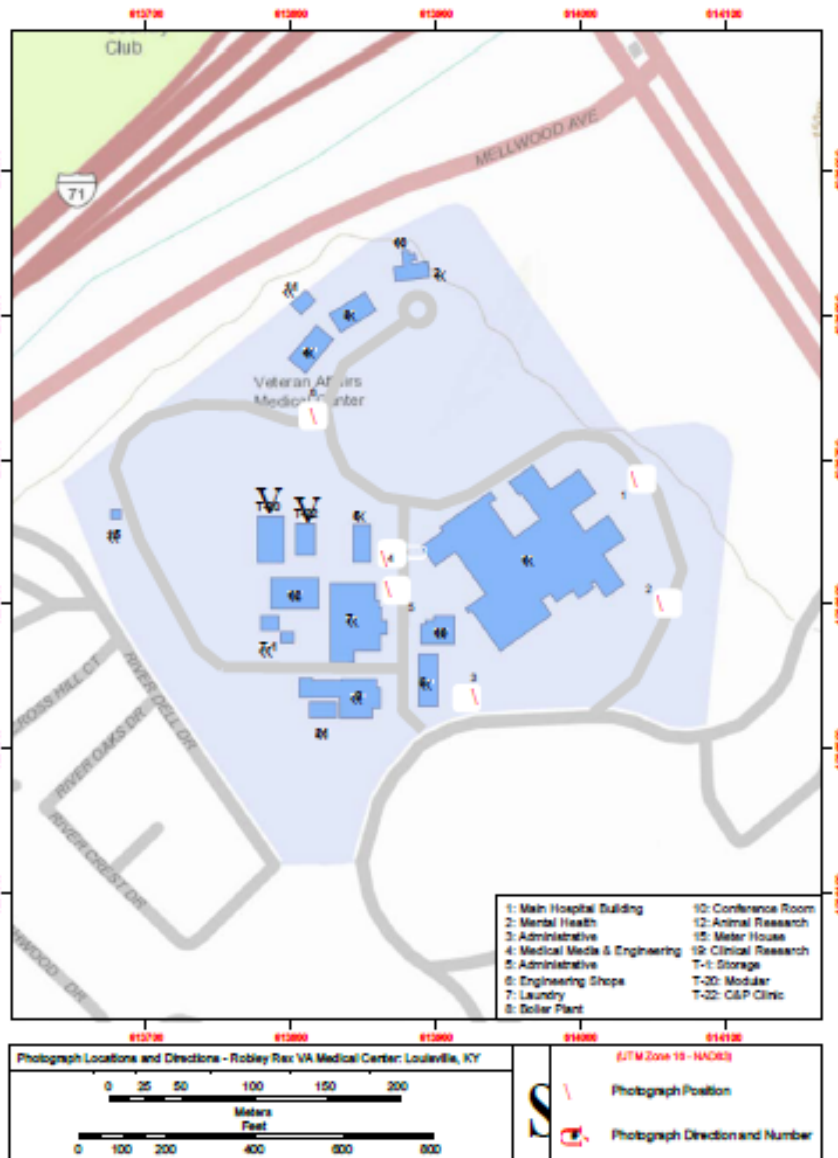
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Building #1

Historic / Present Use: Main Hospital

Building Year Built: 1952

Status: Contributing

The main hospital building at the Louisville VA hospital features characteristics typical of the standard plan Third Generation program. As with other standard plan-based hospitals from the Third Generation, the building has a very utilitarian exterior, featuring regularly spaced fenestration, no elaborate architectural ornamentation, and a modest entrance. The building consists of a central block with two prominent wings at the primary façade of the northeast elevation. While the first floor is clad in limestone, red brick

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covers the remainder of the façade. The central block rises to a maximum height of nine stories, excluding the penthouse at the center, but the extremities of the wings are only seven and eight stories in height, giving the building a stepped appearance. The two wings on the southwest elevation are both eight stories in height.



Main Hospital, main façade, northeast side



Main Hospital, East facade

The northeast façade, with the main hospital entrance, has experienced limited changes since the hospital opened in 1952. The concrete canopy remains intact, a modest indicator of the entrance that marks a sharp change from the elaborate entrances of government buildings of previous generations. A handicap access ramp has been added, but not at the expense of the original plate glass windows flanking the main door. To further indicate the primary entrance to the facility, VA architects clad the first floor of the structure in stone, but the rear and secondary facades are clad solely in brick. Several of the windows on the northeast façade have been sealed and bricked in, presumably to make the corresponding interior spaces suitable for a new purpose. The roof terraces have also been enclosed, but that alteration resulted in windows and brickwork identical to the existing building.

As patient needs changed, new conflicts such as Korea and Vietnam further expanded the veteran population, and medical innovations necessitated changes to the hospital, the Louisville VA Hospital witnessed a number of additions and alterations. In 1977, plans were developed for the addition of an Education Building, located at the southern corner of the extant hospital building. Further additions, in 1986, for additional clinical and education spaces, began filling in the spaces between the different units of the main structure. Finally, the last major addition, in 1996 for ambulatory care, extended to the southwest beyond the original Education Building addition.

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Main Hospital, south corner



Main Hospital, rear additions

As a result of these changes, the original asymmetrical and rectilinear footprint created from intersecting wings has transformed. The additions filled in the spaces between wings, creating a larger footprint increased on the southeast and southwest elevations. These additions are of varying heights, continuing the stepped appearance of the original hospital through to the newer portions. However, these additions have been limited to the rear of the original hospital building, keeping the original façade largely intact. When the Louisville VA Hospital developed and designed these additions, the facility followed the design characteristics of the existing original hospital building. The additions are clad in brick and have regularly-spaced fenestration, just as on the historic portion of the hospital building. Horizontal banding distinguishes the additions from the original structure.

Building #2

Historic Use: Managers'
Quarters

Present Use: Mental Health

Year Built: 1952

Status: Contributing

As with many Third Generation hospitals, the residential buildings often take their cue from residential architecture. The former managers' quarters at Louisville, now housing mental health facilities, references residential architecture of the mid-twentieth century with its picture windows, broad façade facing the street, and its personal scale. An addition is on the west elevation, but the building retains a largely rectangular footprint. The one-story building is located near other residential structures at the northern edge of the hospital campus. The building is clad in red brick similar to the main hospital building. As with many Third Generation hospitals, the managers' quarters is clustered together with former quarters for various staff members, creating a small residential section removed from the main hospital building.

Building #3

Historic Use: Apartment Building (Staff)

Year Built: 1952

Status: Contributing

Building #4

Historic Use: Nurses' Quarters

Present Use: Medical Media and Engineering

Year Built: 1952

Status: Contributing

Present Use: Administrative



Buildings 3 and 4

Buildings #3 and #4 have been linked with a brick hyphen, creating one large building of a total width of 24 bays with a segmented rectangular footprint. The former quarters and apartments are alike; they each have red brick exteriors, flat roofs, two-story height, and limited architectural embellishment. Shallow brick bands are found along the windows. The red brick connection links the buildings, but does not have similar window arrangement or roofline as the historic buildings. The historic appearance of the two original historic buildings remains intact, as the hyphen links the two sections, but does not obscure them. The doors and windows appear to have been replaced, possibly a result of the change from residential to administrative use. The quarters are located near the former managers' quarters in the northern section of the campus, creating a residential pocket within the larger hospital facility.

Building #5

Historic Use: Nurse Quarters

Present Use: Administrative

Year Built: 1952

Status: Contributing

The nurses' quarters were likely constructed initially as attendants' quarters, given its placement closer to the main hospital building and removed from the collection of residential buildings at the northern end of the site. The one-story building is constructed of the same red brick as the other historic buildings on campus. The building is devoid of architectural ornamentation other than shallow brick bands delineating the fenestration. The building has a flat roof and roughly rectangular footprint, with the exception of the recessed entrance at the southeast corner. The former quarters is eight bays wide and oriented towards the east and, thus, the main hospital building.

Building #6

Historic Use: Garage

Present Use: Engineering Shops

Year Built: 1952

Status: Contributing

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The former garage indicates its past life with large vehicular access doors on the west elevation, but at least two of the openings have been retrofitted with pedestrian doors. The building is a simple one-story red brick building with no architectural ornamentation, emphasizing the functional quality of the building. The southernmost two bays are slightly taller in height, giving the roof a stepped appearance. The building features a rectangular footprint, oriented toward the west. The former garage is located to the southwest of the main hospital building, near other support facilities and several research laboratories.

Building #8

Historic / Present Use: Boiler

Plant Year Built: 1952

Status: Contributing

The boiler plant is located adjacent to the laundry with the other support buildings immediately west of the main hospital building. The two-tier red brick building has two single-story sections to the south and west. The roofs of all the sections are flat. As with the majority of the buildings on campus, the building features limited architectural ornamentation, consisting solely of a narrow concrete band underscoring the upper windows. Mechanical equipment surrounds the structure.

Building #10

Historic Use: Personnel Garage

Present Use: Conference Room

Year Built: 1952

Status: Contributing

The former garage associated with the manager's quarters (Building #2) has been altered to serve as a conference room for the hospital facility. Located adjacent to the former quarters, the one-story brick clad structure has a shallow hip roof. What was once, presumably, the garage door has since been converted to a window with the remaining space filled in with brick.

Building #11

Historic Use: Personnel Garage

Present Use: Storage

Year Built: 1952

Status: Contributing

The single-story brick garage is located behind the former staff and nurses' quarters. The garage retains its four original bays with garage doors, but it appears another bay has been added. The building has a flat roof, brick cladding, and no architectural ornamentation.

Building #12

Historic / Present Use: Animal

Research Year Built: 1952

Status: Contributing

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The animal research building is a one-story red brick building with a wide band of concrete at the upper third of the exterior. The building has a rectangular footprint that appears to have been expanded with additions since its initial construction. The flat roof behind a parapet wall necessitates the scuppers and downspouts along the north elevation. The building has few windows and doors, likely due to its intended function.

Building #15

Historic / Present Use: Electric Meter

House Year Built: 1952

Status: Contributing

The electric meter house is a tiny square structure located on the periphery of the campus and now surrounded by electrical equipment. The one-story brick structure has a flat roof and a single door, and an emphatically functional appearance.

Building #19

Historic Use: Radioisotope Laboratory

Present Use: Clinical Research

Year Built: 1952

Status:

Contributing

The clinical research building was constructed originally as a dedicated radioisotope laboratory. The building consists of a two-story block with a one-story section at the rear, resulting in an irregular footprint. As with the other historic buildings on campus, the former laboratory is constructed of brick with minimal architectural ornamentation. The building is located to the west of the main hospital building, adjacent to the support buildings such as the laundry and engineering. Despite the irregular footprint and multiple sections, the roofs are all flat. The building is oriented towards the northwest.

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Building 19, former Radioisotope Lab, now Research Facility

Building #T1

Historic Use: Paint

Shop Present Use:

Storage Year Built:

1952

Status: Contributing

The paint shop is located within the collection of support buildings west of the main hospital building. Unlike almost every other building on campus, the paint shop is not clad in brick but in shingles. The one-story building has a shallow gable roof sheathed in corrugated metal, historic six-over-six double-hung sash windows, and a large garage door as the primary access.

Building #7

Historic / Present Use:

Laundry Year Built: 1952

Status: Non-contributing building

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Despite retaining its historic use, the numerous additions to the laundry have rendered it no longer contributing to the Louisville VA historic district. The one-story brick building has been expanded to the north and west, but the new additions utilized the same red brick as the older portions of the structure. The new additions have also resulted in the central section retaining its flat roof while the newer sections feature metal clad shed roofs. The water table appears to be clad in stucco and painted white. The windows have been replaced and additional vehicular access points have been added. The resulting footprint is largely irregular, with multiple projecting bays on the east and south elevations, maybe to provide access points for delivery trucks.



Building 7, Laundry

Building #T20

Present Use: Administrative

Year Built: 2006

Status: Non-contributing building

Building T20 is a modern addition to the Louisville campus, located to the west of the main hospital building, with the other support facilities for the hospital. The modular building is one story with a shallow gable roof. The building rests on a concrete pad and is clad in faux brick, perhaps in an effort to blend with the historic character of the campus. The building possesses a rectangular footprint.

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Building #T22

Present Use: Compensation / Pension

Year Built: 2009

Status: Non-contributing building

Located adjacent to building T20, the compensation / pension office is also a one-story modular building clad in faux brick. The building has a rectangular footprint and slight projecting overhang at the primary façade. The building is situated on a concrete pad.

Structure #14

Present Use: Flag

Pole Year Built: 1987

Status: Non-contributing structure

A flag pole was once located to the northeast of the main hospital building, but the current metal flag pole is now sited to the southeast. The simple pole is relatively unadorned.

Contributing Features

VA Building No.	Function	Year Constructed
1	Main Hospital Building	1952
2	Mental Health	1952
3	Administrative	1952
4	Medical Media & Engineering	1952
5	Administrative	1952
6	Engineering Shops	1952
7	Laundry	1952
8	Boiler Plant	1952
10	Conference Room	1952
11	Storage	1952
12	Animal Research	1954
15	Meter House	1952
19	Clinical Research	1952

Non-contributing Features

VA Building No.	Function	Year Constructed
T-20	Administrative Building	2006
T-22	Compensation/Pension Office	2009
7	Laundry	1952
14	Flagpole	1987

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

HEALTH/MEDICINE

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

Period of Significance

1952-1958

Significant Dates

1952

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

NA

Cultural Affiliation

NA

Architect/Builder

Veterans

Period of Significance (justification)

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

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Statement of Significance

Summary Paragraph

The Louisville Veterans Administration Hospital (JFEG-1657) meets National Register Criterion A and is significant within the context United States Third Generation Veterans Hospitals, a study completed to support the Third Generation Veterans Hospital multiple property listing. Louisville's VA Hospital functioned as a general medical and surgical hospital featuring 494 beds when it opened in 1952. Due to the pressing need for modern healthcare facilities for an increasing veteran population following World War II, the VA implemented a nationwide construction campaign resulting in new hospitals. This particular type of VA hospital, based on a standardized plan developed by VA's own architectural staff, represents VA's answer to providing much-needed healthcare while also operating within certain budgetary constraints.

History of the Louisville VA Hospital

Immediately following World War II, VA faced charges its hospitals were sub-standard, a situation viewed as completely unacceptable by the American public in a post-war flush of patriotic fervor. Congressional investigations followed. VA responded with replacing the Administrator, General Frank T. Hines, with the popular General Omar Bradley. Bradley and his staff implemented a series of significant changes to the VA, including the development of an independent Department of Medicine and Surgery and a new hospital construction program. The new medical department liberated VA doctors and nurses from the restraints of the Civil Service Commission, fomenting research conducted by VA doctors, links to local medical schools, and the end of the isolation of its medical staff.

VA further sought to erase the charge of "medieval" healthcare by constructing a series of new, modern hospitals. The prevailing theories at the time called for skyscraper hospitals that housed all necessary medical services within a single structure, southern exposure for patient rooms to the extent possible, and rejecting traditional architectural styles added at the expense of the underlying structure. To build the latest in hospital architecture, VA turned to the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and their existing network of private architecture firms. VA developed general guidelines and parameters, but left individual designs to the architects.

When the architects began submitting designs judged too costly to build at a time when VA faced grown budgetary concerns, the efforts by the architects in private practice were replaced by those within the VA bureaucracy. These architects developed a standardized plan to be built at locations across the United States that would be practically identical to each other, including brick exteriors and stone facing along portions of the primary façade. The veterans hospital at Louisville is representative of this type of Third Generation veterans hospital.

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However the new hospital would take time to build, and veterans needed healthcare facilities immediately. In Louisville and other sites across the United States, VA obtained surplus properties from other government agencies, such as the Army. The Army constructed Nichols General Hospital in the Louisville area in 1942. The hospital was a cantonment-type facility consisting of around 50 single story structures built to be a temporary means of providing healthcare to soldiers. When the VA assumed control by April of 1946, VA had already decided to build its new hospital elsewhere in the city of Louisville. On December 21, 1945, President Harry Truman signed off on a Federal Board of Hospitalization recommendation to obtain two properties along Zorn Avenue for the construction of a 750-bed general medical and surgical hospital.⁸

Several characteristics of the new Louisville VA Hospital were called out as the “latest” and “most modern,” to underline the improved services for patients who were arriving from the temporary facility of the Nichols hospitals. Services and patients were located within one building, rather than scattered across multiple buildings, facilitating doctors’ movements among patients. The tuberculosis wing had its own equipment for examinations and kitchen for pre-cleaning dishes to prevent contamination across the facility. The operating rooms featured artificial lighting rather than windows. The floors designated for the care of neuropsychiatric facilities provided the latest in treatments, including insulin-shock and electro-shock therapies. Along with the added treatment benefits, the patients at the VA hospital also had access to a theater, library, and an internal broadcast system that offered four different channels and original programming.⁹

The Louisville VA Hospital possessed many of the same features found in other VA hospitals of the period, regardless of architect. When the hospital was designed, the main entrance opened into the main lobby, the central focus for the first floor. The lobby received detailing not found in other rooms of the hospital, such as marble paneling and a terrazzo floor. From the lobby, patients proceeded past the elevator bank to admitting, management personnel filtered through to various offices, and medical staff had access to various clinics, offices, and conference rooms. The second floor housed the various occupational therapy rooms, including photography, woodworking, and jewelry, along with the main kitchen and some treatment rooms, such as hydrotherapy.

Beyond the first and second floors, the upper floors were originally devoted predominately to treatment and patient rooms. With the elevator banks at the center of the structure, doctors’ offices and exam rooms were often located on the central horizontal portion of the hospital, with the patient rooms on the flanking wings. Louisville featured a mix of large wards with 16 beds housed in a single space as well as smaller wards (4 beds), and private rooms. As found in other VA hospitals

⁸ 25th Anniversary, *VA Hospital, Louisville, Kentucky*, (n.p., 1977), 9, Office of Public Affairs, Robley Rex VAMC, Louisville, Kentucky; Resolution Adopted by the Federal Board of Hospitalization, 21 December 1945, Geographic Files 1919-1959, Department of Medicine and Surgery, Veterans Administration, Record Group 15, A1, Entry 64, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.

⁹ Shaw, 16-23.

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of this period, the larger wards were located at the extremities of the main corridor, with the smaller rooms housed on the wings. The nurse station was found at the juncture of the main block and the wings, giving the staff easy access to the patients under their supervision.

The nationwide general guidelines sketched out limited specific plan elements. For example, the upper floors tended to be identical in general layout, with the exception of the floor dedicated to the care of psychiatric patients. This floor generally was segregated from the other floors of the hospital, often with specialized therapy and treatment rooms. Almost all the VA hospitals of this period also provided the psychiatric floors with access to enclosed rooftop terraces, providing a limited form of outdoor exercise for these patients. The Louisville VA Hospital had rooftop terraces at the seventh and eighth floors, a result of an early focus on neuropsychiatric patient care.

The hospital met changes in healthcare demands over the succeeding years. The pharmacy and clinical laboratories required additional spaces by the late 1970s.¹⁰ An ambulatory care center was completed in 1988, followed by expansions in the late 1990s. The Louisville VAMC employed modern medical techniques, as needed; for example, the facility dedicated spaces for an MRI, spinal cord injury clinic, and an updated prosthetic department.¹¹

In April 2010, the Louisville VA Hospital was renamed to honor Robley Rex, a native Kentuckian and veteran of World War I. Rex served in the U.S. Army as part of the 28th Infantry Division. Upon his return to Kentucky, Rex worked for the U.S. Postal Department and became an active member of veterans organizations such as the Disabled American Veterans and Veterans of Foreign Affairs. In 1986, he began volunteering at the Louisville VAMC. In his 23 years as a volunteer, he logged over 14,600 hours of service at the VA hospital. Rex died in 2009 at the age of 108.¹² This facility is the only VA hospital to be named after a volunteer.

How the Louisville VA Hospital Meets the Registration Requirements of the Third Generation VA Hospital MPS

The Louisville VA Hospital is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A under Health / Medicine at the state level for its importance in providing advanced medical care to the Louisville area veteran population following World War II. At Louisville, VA constructed a state-of-the-art modern hospital, a physical manifestation of VA's break from its

¹⁰ 25th Anniversary, 14.

¹¹ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, "History of the Robley Rex VAMC," <http://www.louisville.va.gov/about/history.asp> (accessed 7 June 2011).

¹² U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, "Robley Rex Bio," <http://www.louisville.va.gov/news/robleyrexbio.asp> (accessed 7 June 2011).

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perceived outmoded medical treatments and hospitals used since World War I. The hospital, with its central high rise main building, reflected new standards in current medical care. In addition, VA provided up-to-date medical services, such as dedicated tuberculosis treatment within the hospital and operating rooms with artificial lighting. The Louisville VA Hospital serves as an example of the standard hospital type constructed by the VA in response to the increased need for healthcare facilities for veterans following World War II.

Furthermore, the Louisville VA Hospital is eligible for inclusion in the NRHP under Criterion A for Politics / Government for its association with the Third Generation veterans hospital construction program from 1946 to 1958. The program provided a plum federally-funded project to those areas chosen as the site for the new hospitals, thus leading to avid competition between cities, maneuvering by politicians at all levels of government, and advocacy by veterans organizations to secure the needed hospitals. In 1946, 49,144 veterans called Kentucky home and 33,573 of them were veterans of World War II, thus emphasizing the need for a hospital in Kentucky.¹³ The decision by VA to replace the existing former Army hospital with the only Third Generation hospital to be built in Kentucky provided services to this significant portion of the population.

Of the hospitals built during this initiative following World War II, there are two types of Third Generation Veterans Hospitals representing continuity in medical care and innovation in delivery as new facilities came into service. Transitional hospitals filled an immediate need and the property type consists of existing facilities adapted and expanded to provide up-to-date care while new facilities were developed from the ground up. These hospitals include those constructed or appropriated by the military during the war and transferred to the VA when the war ended and those constructed by the VA during the second period of hospital design (1919-1950). Phased construction brought new hospitals into the VA health care system, and these new buildings represent the other property type within the Third Generation Veterans Hospitals. The new hospitals were tailored to veteran care, and their construction was a balance of politics and practice. Some were architect designed and built through a collaborative of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and private practitioners, while others were specifically modelled for neuropsychiatric care. The VA also produced new hospitals, with designs by in-house staff that were modelled on the Corps' architect plans but stripped of any ornament that could be interpreted as symbolic excess. The Louisville hospital is one of the latter.

The Louisville VA Hospital is an example of a VA-designed, new hospital developed during this third generation of medical facilities established for veterans. The plan followed the prescription for modernizing health care that the VA ordered and that gave the Third Generation complexes their distinctive, high rise central building with a stratified floor plan like that in Louisville. The needs of veteran-focused medical care shaped the layout of the hospitals from basement to rooftop accommodating the mechanical systems, the public, and the patients on specific floors and zones. Patient care dominated the interior space with individual and shared rooms, treatment and exam spaces,

¹³ Administrator of Veterans' Affairs. *Annual Report of the Administration of Veterans' Affairs for the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 1946*. Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1947.

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and a hub at the center for elevators, visitor lobbies, and nurses' stations. Therapies and treatments for paraplegics, as well as for tuberculosis and mental illness, influenced the floor plans; so did gender. Structure and ornament were streamlined, from the steel-frame skeleton to the exterior finishes of plain brick facing. Managing cost was as important as patient care which placed greater significance on the floorplan and lent the VA-designed, new hospitals uniformity. The entrances were small pavilions, signage was limited, fenestration was regular, and mechanical equipment was housed in rooftop penthouses. Wings added space to the tall, multi-story central building. These initial extensions provide precedent for later expansions as emerging medical practices and treatments demanded new spaces. Louisville has a particularly important example of a Third Generation Veterans Hospital – intact and in use – with continuity in form and association, materials and feeling, and setting in keeping with the VA formula for a modern and new hospital.

While no longer new, the Louisville VA Hospital remains a modern facility and retains its integrity through its ongoing service of medical care to veterans, maintaining its location, setting and association consistent to that mission. Visually, the red brick central building and modest entrance continue to dominate the medical campus; changes for parking and accessibility, efficiency and safety left the primary circulation patterns in place and the emphasis on the care provided. Ancillary buildings housed support functions, such as laundries and power houses, and these too were devoid of architectural ornament. Instead their utilitarian appearance and small scale reflected their role in the medical center operation and the primacy of patient care from the 1952 opening through the present day.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

25th Anniversary, VA Hospital, Louisville, Kentucky. n.p.: 1977, available at the Office of Public Affairs, Robley Rex VAMC, Louisville, Kentucky

Hannah, Lindsay and Susan Barrett Smith, *United States Third Generation Veterans Hospitals National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation*, September 2011.

Heiman, Lee. "The Story of a Hill," *The Courier-Journal Magazine* (Louisville), 17 July 1949, 5.

Record Group 15, Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.

Shaw, Harry. "What the New V.A. Hospital is Like," *The Courier-Journal Magazine* (Louisville), 20 April 1952, 16.

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
☐ previously listed in the National Register
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscapes Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

☐ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☒ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other
Repository : FPO, U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 58 acres

Longitude/Latitude Coordinates

	Latitude	Longitude
Coordinate 1	38.270590°	-85.698808°
Coordinate 2	38.268376°	-85.698902°
Coordinate 3	38.269389°	-85.695803°
Coordinate 4	38.271199°	-85.695498°
Coordinate 5	38.272944°	-85.697612°

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundaries of the district are illustrated on the maps on pages 3 and 6, and are reported by the Jefferson County Property Valuation Administrator as 58 acres with the account ID 088P00050000.

Boundary Justification

Identified boundaries are the appropriate area for listing as they are the historic property lines for the Louisville VAMC, and those acres retain integrity of location, setting, and association.

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Multiple Property Listing

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Lindsay S. Hannah / Project Manager

organization R. Christopher Goodwin & Associates, Inc.

date September 1, 2017

street & number 309 Jefferson Hwy, Suite A

telephone 504-837-1940

city or town New Orleans

state LA

zip code 70121

e-mail lhannah@rcgoodwin.com

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Same Information for all Photographs:

Name of Property: Louisville Veterans Administration

Hospital City or Vicinity: Louisville

County: Jefferson

State: Kentucky

Photographer: Katy Coyle

Date Photographed: 28 February 2011

1. Primary façade (northeast elevation) of main hospital building (Building #1) of Louisville Veterans Administration Hospital. Camera pointed southwest.
2. View of east corner of main hospital building (Building #1). Camera pointed west.
3. View of south corner of main hospital building (Building #1). Camera pointed north.
4. View of southwest elevation of main hospital building (Building #1) with view of multiple rear additions. Camera pointed northeast.
5. View of a representative outbuilding, the former radioisotope laboratory (Building #19), currently a research facility. Camera pointed southeast.
6. South elevation of former quarters buildings (Buildings #3 and #4) with connection hyphen. Camera pointed north.
7. Southeast elevation of laundry (Building #7). Camera pointed northwest.

Property Owner:

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)

name

street & number

telephone

city or town

state

zip code