

OMAHA, Neb. -- Hundreds of millions of dollars were included in President Barack Obama's budget plan for 2011 for Omaha's VA Medical Center announced on Monday. More than half a billion would be used for much-needed renovations at the hospital located at 42nd and Woolworth streets.

"The fact that the president put money in his budget for Omaha, Nebraska is great news for the veteran community," said U.S. Rep. Lee Terry.

Six months ago, Terry and others toured the 60-year-old facility. They found cracked paint in the hallways and rusty pipes in the boiler room.

"The facility surely has some aging issues," said Will Ackerman, with the medical center.

Ackerman said \$56 million of the money set aside for the medical center in the president's 2011 budget is mainly for planning and design. Another \$500 million would be needed to build a new parking garage, new in patient rooms and the demolition of the old main hospital.

"It's really exciting because it shows the commitment of the administration and the Department of Veterans Affairs to providing a 21st century health care system," Terry said.

Congress must approve the proposal in the president's budget. If that happens, designs could be drawn up for the renovation by the start of next year. The remaining money needed would be in the 2012 budget.

