



Highlights of [GAO-08-684](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

The Federal and District of Columbia Government Real Property Act of 2006 (Public Law 109-396) mandated GAO's review of the property exchange between the District and the federal government. None of the conveyances had occurred by the beginning of GAO's audit phase. After consulting with the congressional committees specified in the law, GAO developed research questions that reflect an assessment of property exchanges and development progress to date. GAO's objectives were to determine (1) the status of the conveyances and transfers of the properties identified in the law; (2) what steps the District and the federal government have taken toward completing the conveyances, what factors have affected their completion, and what additional steps remain; (3) what preliminary development has occurred on the properties exchanged between the District and the federal government, and what are the current plans for use of these properties; and (4) what development challenges the District and federal government face going forward. GAO analyzed planning and property documents; conducted site visits; and interviewed senior officials from the District and the Department of the Interior (DOI) among others. DOI and the General Services Administration agreed with our findings, while the District and the Architect of the Capitol (AOC) did not comment on our overall findings. All provided technical clarifications which we incorporated as appropriate.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on [GAO-08-684](#). For more information, contact Terrell Dorn at (202) 512-6923 or dorn@ga.gov.

FEDERAL REAL PROPERTY

Property Conveyances between the District of Columbia and the Federal Government Await Completion, and Development Will Take Many Years

What GAO Found

No property conveyances between the District and the federal government have occurred as of June 6, 2008. All transfers of administrative jurisdiction, which do not involve the transfer of title, became effective the day (Dec. 15, 2006) that the President signed the Federal and District of Columbia Government Real Property Act of 2006. Nine conveyances between the Secretary of the Interior and the District, excluding Poplar Point, are planned to be completed by the end of summer 2008. The District intends to complete the conveyance of Poplar Point by the fall of 2009, if it is able to meet several conditions in the law, including developing a Secretary of the Interior-approved land-use plan. The date for the completion of the conveyances of title between the General Services Administration and the District is uncertain and depends on an agreement between the District and the AOC on the District conveying not more than 12 acres of District property to the AOC.

Although the District and the federal government have taken several steps to complete the conveyances, several factors have affected their efforts, and additional steps must be taken to complete the conveyances. The District and the National Park Service formed working groups as a first step toward completing the conveyances. However, negotiations about cleanup; testing properties for contamination; disagreement over land to be conveyed as part of the Boathouse Row properties, two properties along the western shores of the Anacostia River; and decision changes about environmental impact statement development for Poplar Point have slowed the completion of the conveyances between the District and Secretary of the Interior.

Limited development has occurred on property already transferred or to be conveyed between the District and the federal government. Development will take many years to complete because the District must first develop plans for most of these sites. For example, commercial and residential development of Poplar Point is not likely to begin until 2011 because of the steps, such as the development of a land-use plan, which must be completed before the conveyance can occur. Development may take over a decade to complete at Poplar Point.

The District and the federal government face several challenges as they move forward to develop or manage the exchanged properties. For example, some cleanup and development uncertainties, such as the extent and location of the cleanup required, will likely affect the timeliness of property development at Poplar Point. Other challenges facing the District include (1) transitioning the Deputy Mayor's Office from policymaking and oversight roles to the lead in coordinating development, a function that has not been the Deputy Mayor's Office core business, and (2) reaching community agreement about development at Poplar Point.