

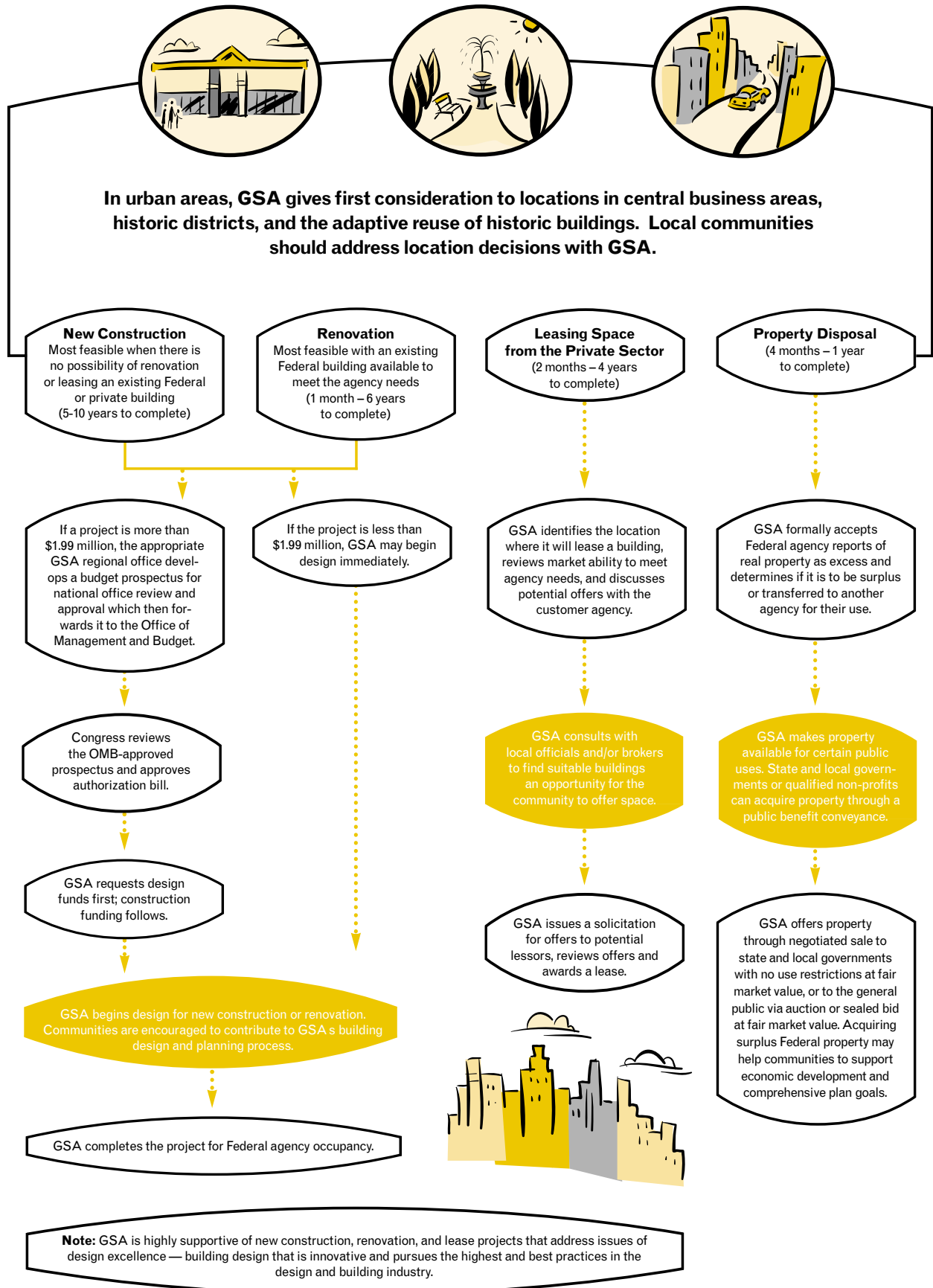
Planning with Communities

A Framework
for Collaboration



Framework for Collaboration

Understanding how Federal agencies work with GSA to determine, analyze, and set a course of action to fulfill space needs may provide opportunities for local communities to collaborate with GSA on location, planning, and design issues.



GSA Real Estate Decision Making

The General Services Administration (GSA) is the nation's largest public real estate organization — housing one million federal workers in 350 million square feet of space in 1,600 cities and towns across the nation. The agency has countless opportunities every year to plan and collaborate with communities. This Framework for Collaboration is a supplemental piece to the Planning with Communities guide, and is designed to provide information on GSA's business practices and the opportunities for local-federal collaboration.

For collaborative planning to be successful, a general understanding of GSA's planning and decision making process is important for both local communities and GSA customers. For example, Federal and local plans may differ on planning schedules, public use of Federal facilities, or the layout of a site plan.

The responsibility for GSA's real estate services and community planning falls under its Public Buildings Service (PBS), which manages 11 regional offices across the country. The regional offices, under the direction of Assistant Regional Administrators, are responsible for portfolio and property management, leasing, site purchases, new construction, renovations, security, and sale of excess property.

GSA satisfies the needs of its Federal customers in a variety of ways. When there is a need for space, GSA and the agency discuss the best way to meet the need. While GSA is the main provider of space for most Federal agencies, the agencies have the choice to use GSA, another agency, or private sector sources to fulfill their space needs. Usually, the needs can be met through one of the following activities:

- **Renovation of an existing Federal building**

This is the preferred option in most cases. Meeting needs in existing Federal space is almost always much

less expensive than leasing space. Altering an existing building typically is much quicker and less expensive than building a new building. However, GSA may be unable to meet an agency's need in an existing Federal building if the agency has special requirements — such as courtroom ceiling heights, open column spacing, separate prisoner and judicial circulation paths, or other special needs. In that case, GSA looks at its overall space needs in a community and plans for other options.

- **Leasing of commercial space**

If suitable federally-owned space is not available, GSA may decide to lease space. Many small requirements are met this way, especially for an agency's customer service operations, such as an office that needs to locate near a specific customer base. Leasing is often the best option for delivering space to a client that has urgent needs, because it can be delivered more quickly than new construction or renovation. Although federally-owned buildings are often less expensive, it makes sense for GSA to maintain a leased inventory as it is more efficiently expanded or reduced in response to changes in agency needs.

- **New construction**

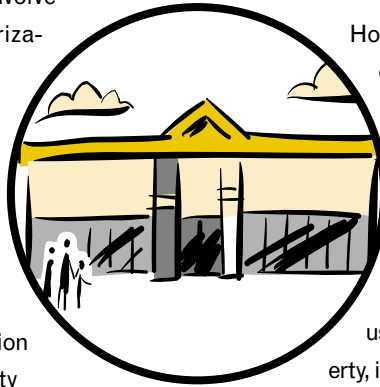
GSA considers constructing new space when a customer's needs cannot be met through existing Federal space or outside leasing. In the long-term, new Federal construction usually provides space that is more economical than leasing. Additionally, high security or other special agency needs are not usually available in the existing commercial market. GSA and the Federal agency typically conduct a feasibility study that identifies whether renovation, leasing, or new construction is the best option. If a decision is made to construct, GSA develops alternatives and submits a proposal to Congress.



Nearly all of GSA's new construction projects require congressional approval because they exceed the \$2 million threshold. New construction can take a long time to implement due to legally mandated reviews, formal public comment, and political involvement. Moreover, congressional authorization is received in two stages:

- (1) approval in year one for design and site purchase, and
- (2) approval in year two for actual construction.

As the building user, the federal agency's involvement in new construction is on-going and extensive. The feasibility study, for example, is often begun more than five years before construction begins. These long lead times provide a good opportunity for GSA to have formal and informal discussions with the community. During these earliest stages of a project GSA begins satisfying the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106 requirements to consider alternatives to and potential impacts of the project. GSA considers a community's public policies, comprehensive land use plans, and economic



development strategies when evaluating the impacts of a new construction project. If the city has preferred sites for new construction, it should consider marketing these sites to GSA and the Federal agency at this time.

However, GSA cannot solicit official public comments until Congress approves the project for design and site acquisition. Further analysis and reconsideration follows after congressional approval.

• Disposal of Property

GSA is responsible for managing the use and disposal of surplus government property, including properties that have been managed by other Federal agencies. GSA transfers properties to other Federal organizations, grants the property for a public benefit or to eligible public or nonprofit entities, or sells it to state or local governments, private individuals, or companies. Local governments and special uses, such as homeless assistance, receive preference, as required by law. During the disposal process, GSA considers many social and economic factors and has extensive dialogue with all interested parties.

Authorities related to Federal planning

The Federal government has recognized the importance of good planning for many years. The following laws, executive orders, and regulations put Federal real estate actions into a specific legal context. Most provide direction or guidance to include local input into Federal decision making:

Public Buildings Act of 1959

Requires that GSA consult with local officials on public building plans and requires GSA's Administrators to give consideration to recommendations from local officials.

The Public Buildings Cooperative Use Act of 1976

Requires GSA to acquire and use space in suitable buildings of historic, architectural, or cultural significance when possible. In addition, it requires GSA to seek new and alternative uses for Federal facilities, provide public access to Federal facilities, and provide free or at-cost space for public, educational, or recreational uses.

Federal Property Management Regulations

Require GSA to survey agency mission, space, and location requirements within a community and include those considerations in community-based policies and plans (*Note: These are undergoing revision; they will become the Federal Management Regulations*).

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969

Requires Federal agencies to consider the effects of all actions on the environment, consider alternatives that reduce impacts, and prepare detailed statements for public and Federal agency review where significant impacts may occur. Agencies are required to solicit and respond to comments from the public, affected interests, and relevant government agencies.

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act

Requires review of any project funded, licensed, permitted, or assisted by the Federal Government for impact on significant historic properties. The agency must allow State Historic Preservation Offices and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation to comment on a proposed project prior to commencement.

Section 111 of the National Historic Preservation Act

Builds on the Public Buildings Cooperative Use Act of 1976 and allows Federal agencies to lease historic properties to public or private entities for alternative uses. After consultation with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, Federal agencies may also enter into agreements with outside entities for the management of the historic buildings or property.

Executive Order 13006: Locating Federal Facilities in Historic Properties in Central Cities

Requires that Federal agencies give first consideration to locate Federal facilities in historic buildings and districts within central business areas. Also

directs Federal agencies to remove regulatory barriers, review policies, and build new partnerships with the goal of enhancing participation in the National Historic Preservation Program.

Executive Order 12072: Federal Space Management

Requires that Federal agencies give first consideration to locate Federal facilities in central business areas or adjacent areas of similar character, to use them to make downtowns attractive places to work, conserve existing resources, and encourage redevelopment. Opportunities for locating cultural, educational, recreational, or commercial activities within the proposed facility must also be considered.

Federal Urban Land Use Act of 1949

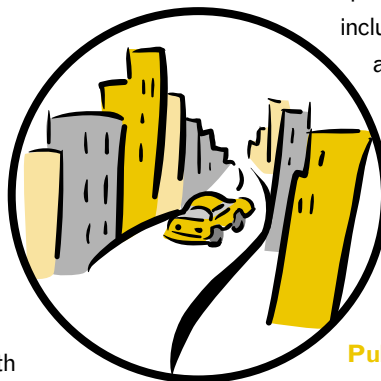
Requires GSA to consult with planning agencies and local elected officials and coordinate Federal projects with development plans and objectives of the state, region, and locality where the project is to be carried out.

Competition in Contracting Act of 1984

Requires GSA to acquire supplies and services, including leased space, through the use of full and open competitive procedures. This requirement has direct impact on GSA's ability to contract for services through Business Improvement Districts and other downtown management organizations.

Procedures for Implementation of Public Buildings Amendments of 1988 (Public Law 100-678), Section 6

Requires GSA Public Buildings Service to consider all requirements (other than procedural requirements) of local zoning laws and other local laws relating to landscaping, open space, building setback and height, historic preservation, and aesthetic qualities of a building, including complying to the maximum extent practicable with building codes in the local jurisdiction.





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