

The Site Selection Guide

U.S. General Services Administration Public Buildings Service

The Site Selection Guide

U.S. General Services Administration
Public Buildings Service
Office of the Chief Architect

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Foreword

Federal courthouses, office buildings, and other facilities represent the American government's presence in communities across the nation. Not only do these buildings facilitate important federal missions, but they also can demonstrate clearly how the federal government contributes to improving the quality of life in local communities. These contributions include the creation of public spaces and plazas; the preservation of historic buildings and national landmarks; the commitment to improve environmental quality and energy conservation efforts; and, the potential to spark economic revitalization of our urban centers and business districts in both cities and towns.

Critical decisions made at the very beginning of every capital development project have major consequences for the overall success of the project. The site selection decision has a dramatic impact on almost every facet of the design and construction process. The site affects the organization; massing; functionality; sustainability; operational and economic efficiency; security; and last, but certainly not least, the aesthetic qualities of the building.

The site selection is a "life cycle" decision that recognizes the balance among the initial cost of the real estate, the overall cost of executing the project, and the cost of operating the facility. It also recognizes the benefit (or cost) to the local community and the environment. While the initial cost may be a significant driver, all factors must be considered in order to make the right decision.

In this Guide, the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) posits a site selection framework to assist the Project Team on the road to success. It addresses issues of both process and principle and is an extension of our quest to ensure that federal buildings are inviting, productive, efficient and safe places to conduct government business. We hope that this Guide can support GSA, our customer agencies, and our consultants in maintaining our legacy of quality public buildings.

F. Joseph Moravec
Commissioner of the Public Buildings Service
U.S. General Services Administration

Introduction

The primary audience for this Site Selection Guide is GSA's real estate and design professionals and the customer agencies. A secondary audience for this Guide comprises the many stakeholders in the site acquisition process, including other members of the government, as well as GSA's partners. This Guide will be used by individuals possessing a wide range of site acquisition, site selection, and design knowledge.

GSA has broad discretion in selecting sites for public buildings under 40 U.S.C. § 3304. This Guide provides an outline for the entire site selection process. It is a menu of best site selection practices, GSA experience, and recommendations. Suggestions include who the participants should be, what roles they play, when the various activities of the process occur, and where the requirements can be found. GSA recognizes that every site selection is unique and that the required activities vary for every project.

This Guide encourages best practices for site selection in order to ensure completeness and consistency nationwide, to address the needs of the customer and the community, and to work toward a healthy environment. It is based on the premise that site selection is the first step toward responsible development. Most important, this Site Selection Guide is a tool for finding the most appropriate sites from economic, programmatic, and policy perspectives.

Benefits of Using the Site Selection Guide

By following the steps and suggestions in this Guide, the user can

- Ensure that the selected site is viable for the intended federal facility;
- Reduce the risk of unanticipated difficulties and their impact in terms of schedule and expense;
- Manage expectations among participants and increase understanding of the site selection process; and
- Encourage innovation and creativity in the site selection process while incorporating existing precedents and industrywide best practices.

“The quality of site design represents a significant federal investment and should, wherever possible, make a positive contribution to the surrounding urban, suburban, or rural landscape in terms of conservation, community design and improvement efforts, local economic development and planning, and environmentally responsible practices.”

P-100, Facilities Standards for the Public Building Service

“The choice and development of the building site should be considered the first step of the design process. This choice should be made in cooperation with local agencies. Special attention should be paid to the general ensemble of streets and public places of which federal buildings will form a part. Where possible, buildings should be located so as to permit a generous development of landscape.”

Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan
(D-NY)

Tools and Resources

This Guide includes useful tools and resources, such as simplified process charts, comprehensive checklists, project examples, sample worksheets, and examples, to illustrate the recommendations and suggestions. The following are some of the innovations in the Guide:

- Roles and responsibilities chart for GSA team members and contractors;
- Checklists of evaluation criteria;
- Strategies for interactions and communications with customer agencies and community stakeholders;
- Summary of major federal laws, Executive Orders, regulations, and GSA directives;
- List of resources for site selection expertise, including GSA Web site sources and professional associations;
- Summary of the NEPA process as it relates to the site selection process; and a
- Troubleshooting guide that contains the answers to frequently asked questions about the site selection process.

Site Selection Philosophy

Philosophy

“These buildings will be here for hundreds of years—long after we [have] relocated the last tenant, or written the last report. They should be in the right location — that is our overriding responsibility.”

Jan Ziegler, Assistant Regional Administrator, Region 3



Las Cruces

GSA's preferred site for a courthouse emerged when the city's plans changed. The project's ability to anchor Main Street and a study of parking impacts won the city's support.

Site selection has a long-lasting impact on every real estate decision that GSA makes. The process, issues, and criteria that support this decision are of great importance, not only to GSA, but also to the local and federal communities, the environment, and future generations.

This Guide offers Regional Offices a framework for addressing important actions and performing evaluations in the selection of sites for federal facilities. GSA recognizes that every site selection is unique and that each Project Team ultimately determines the best process for their project. The following discussion outlines the intent and philosophy of the federal government when selecting sites for new federal facilities.

Location

Location of federal facilities involves both the general area and the specific site. The location of a federal facility speaks volumes, a message heard years after construction is complete. It dictates almost everything that follows, from transportation access and environmental impact; to the federal government's involvement with local initiatives and economies; to the placement, form, and cost of the building.

The selected site has a major impact on the customer agency in terms of convenience, access, and the quality of the work environment. It also has an impact on the project's initial and life cycle costs and on the community's economy, sense of place, and social fabric.

Federal law and Executive Orders (E.O.s) address location choices. The Rural Development Act requires that agencies give first priority to rural areas, unless the agency mission or program requirements call for locations in an urban area. For projects located in urban areas, the primary Executive Orders that impact location are E.O. 12072 ("Federal Space Management," which requires first consideration to centralized community business areas) and E.O. 13006 ("Locating Federal Facilities on Historic Properties in Our Nation's Central Cities," which requires first consideration to historic properties within historic districts).

Legacy

GSA and the federal government have developed many programs and initiatives that support responsible development and stewardship of federal facilities. While each of these initiatives has its own identity, it is important to recognize the synergies among

programs, especially how programs support and inform each other. Site selection lays the earliest groundwork for implementing these initiatives, so it is important to address the numerous initiatives in a coordinated fashion.

Design Excellence and Construction Excellence

The choice and development of the building site should be considered the first step of the design process. Finding the best site for the project enhances design and construction excellence. The right site helps the Project Team and design professionals to address issues of quality, community, cost, security, and sustainability.

Sustainability and Environmental Quality

As the government's largest landlord, GSA is in a unique position to protect the environment while providing a quality workspace for its customer agencies. GSA strives to balance short-term project costs with long-term operations, environmental, social, and human benefits while meeting the intended needs of the facility. GSA is committed to incorporating principles of sustainable design and energy efficiency into all of its building projects, aiming for a Silver LEED rating for all of its projects. A commitment to sustainability begins with the site location—avoiding development of inappropriate sites, reducing the environmental impact of building on a site, channeling development to areas with existing infrastructure, and locating near alternative means of transportation.

E.O. 13123 ("Greening the Government Through Efficient Energy Management") challenges the federal government to lead the nation in energy efficient building design, construction, and operation. Furthermore, the government can promote energy efficiency, water conservation, and the use of renewable energy products and help foster markets for emerging technologies. The federal government also is committed to reducing distances driven by its workers, promoting clean air, designing for local climate conditions, and building in areas that already have a supporting infrastructure.

Sites for federal facilities do not have to be pristine to be selected, but they must support public health. The Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) regulates the disclosure, disposal, and remediation of contaminants and allows potentially problematic sites to be improved through the development of federal facilities. Successful projects built on brownfields have been instrumental in improving water quality, beautifying an eyesore, or restoring community character.

What does it mean to build sustainably?

Choose site, design, construction, and operational practices that significantly reduce or eliminate the negative impact of buildings, construction, and operation on the environment and the occupants.



Washington, DC

The Department of the Treasury acquired a brown-field site from the District of Columbia for the new Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms national headquarters. The site is being developed in conjunction with a new Metro station. This commitment will anchor revitalization of this area.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) mandates that all agencies use a systematic, interdisciplinary approach to planning and evaluating potential environmental impacts of projects. Related Executive Orders further mandate wetlands protection, floodplain management, and environmental justice. The investigation and evaluation of potential sites respond to these requirements.

State environmental laws often are more stringent than federal law. The federal government intends to follow both state and federal laws.

Historic Properties

Projects that use historic sites and buildings can serve as examples for successful reclamation and reuse of cultural/historic resources and signal the government's commitment to historic preservation, sustainability, and local communities. These projects set forth the federal government's commitment to provide leadership in the preservation of historic resources and to foster conditions where modern development can coexist with historic properties. The architectural and cultural attributes of historic buildings and sites must be considered to ensure that projects are carried out with a minimum adverse effect on qualities that contribute to their significance.

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) describes the process by which federal agencies, in consultation with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, must consider potential effects on historic properties. When operationally appropriate and economically prudent, E.O. 13006 requires that federal agencies give first consideration to properties within historic districts when selecting locations for their facilities (subject to the requirements of the Rural Development Act and E.O. 12072).

Community Planning

The federal government is committed to earning multiple returns on its projects by making a positive contribution to the existing community in economical, physical, and social terms. Over the past fifty (50) years, the federal government has been directed to address community issues through E.O. 12072, the Public Buildings Cooperative Use Act, and the Federal Urban Land Use Act. At the heart of these directives is early and open communications with local officials and consideration of local planning efforts. GSA can identify and support benefits to the community through dialogue with stakeholders, especially local officials, residents, and the public. The dialogue begins early in the community planning stage and continues through the project development and site selection process.

At the beginning of site selection, the Site Investigation Team should consider how each site offers the potential to coordinate federal resources and strategies with local development and improvement efforts. Areas of common interest may include urban design, parking, mass transit, personal and property security, traffic flow, neighborhood conditions, local area activities, and employee and visitor amenities.

Security

Security has become a major concern in the construction of federal buildings; GSA serves as a leader in the nation's efforts to protect the American people and the federal workforce. A site can provide a safe working environment without becoming a fortress, isolated from the community. Each facility has its own risk assessment; however, there are some general requirements that affect most sites. All new federal buildings should have a minimum standoff distance of fifty (50) feet. Some specialized facilities may require a higher standard of security.

GSA recognizes that dense urban areas and historic properties may require an exemption from the standoff distance and, possibly, from blast criteria. Exemption from the PBS Commissioner must be issued for any reduction or modification of that requirement. In the Commissioner's words, "The 'achievement' of this standoff distance must be based on the feasibility of the site to accommodate a pragmatic, efficient, reasonable, cost-effective, and well-designed facility."

Politics and Partnerships

Federal projects have an enduring impact on the community at large and on the immediate neighborhood. Many individuals and groups benefit from the location and development of a federal facility. Federal investment in each facility can enhance local efforts for economic development or historic preservation, or it may draw attention and resources away from local projects.

Building relationships and creating local partnerships are effective tools in managing political and local concerns. Working in partnership with other groups (state, regional, or city organizations; local community groups; or local developers) can bring additional intellectual resources to a project and involves additional stakeholders in the process. Local partnerships also may attract additional funding and financial resources to the project.



Eugene, Oregon

The city organized a community design exercise to study the proposed locations for a new downtown federal courthouse. The design exercise process helped resolve initial conflicts regarding location and led to agreement on a site that was successful for all.



Omaha, Nebraska

GSA collaborated with the city on a donated site for a build-to-suit National Park Service building, which was recognized as an important early anchor for Omaha's waterfront redevelopment. GSA convened a community workshop and incorporated the city's needs into the competitive procurement. The project has a high-quality site, and Omaha moves forward on its waterfront project.

A recent GSA-commissioned study explains why communities value high-traffic public agencies (including USPS, IRS, SSA, U.S. Trustees, and U.S. Courts). In one large northeastern city, the direct spending by federal employees and visitors alone exceeded \$80 million, enough to support more than one hundred (100) small businesses. In site selection, knowing the relative impacts of various agencies can help with site evaluation and tenant mix. (For more information about the study, see www.gsa.gov/goodneighbor.)

Understanding the local point of view is important in assessing the opportunity for and impact of site selection and facility development. Local politics and political influence are a part of every site selection and should be addressed from the beginning.

Project Management

The goal of every project is a successful design and building—successful for the user, the community, the federal government, and the environment. Project management is one of the keys to a successful project. The following components are critical to successful project management.

Communications

Federal projects involve many, many people and generate significant interest and discussion within the community. One of the keys to successful communications is the early clarification of expectations and the project's ability to meet those expectations. Managing the flow of information is critical to successful internal and external communications; it is equally important to know when and how to share information.

It is beneficial to develop a project Communications Plan and use a Communications Specialist. This specialist creates a Communications Plan for all of the stakeholders (GSA, the customer agency, local officials and developers, congressional delegations, neighboring property owners, residents, and business community members) and the media. The plan also should identify issues of common interest, opportunities, and schedules for communications with different groups of stakeholders.

Project Team

The Project Team evolves and changes over the life of the project, as different expertise is required at different phases. The Asset/Portfolio Manager starts initial project planning. As the Project Team evolves, the Project Manager (PM) oversees all project activities through construction. The PM is responsible for continuity and availability of information and communications through all phases of the project.

Once the team begins preliminary fact-finding for sites, Site Investigation Team members are added to the Project Team. A Site Specialist is generally chosen to lead the Site Investigation Team. The Team Leader should be experienced with the process; the team should include staff and consultants who understand the goals and requirements of the site selection and acquisition process. GSA's Center for Construction and Project Management has developed strong supporting tools and processes to guide Project Managers and their teams.

The multiple interests of the customer, the local community, and the federal government are not always in full agreement. The Project Team considers and prioritizes all concerns when evaluating sites and determines which factors are critical.

Work Plan

The key tool for successful project management is the Project Management Plan (PMP). Using the PMP as the foundation, the site selection phase of a project has its own Work Plan, which identifies schedule, budget, staffing, and work tasks for that phase. The Site Selection Work Plan helps the team coordinate their tasks, plan the work process, understand the roles and responsibilities of GSA staff and contractors, and chart the anticipated schedule.

Decision-Making

Developing support among decision-makers and obtaining project approvals are necessary for the success of the project. Identifying who is responsible for making each decision and recognizing when decisions are needed are equally important. Timely communications and advanced planning support confident decision-making.

The following are some activities that have a major influence on the schedule:

- Community involvement,
- Project requirements,
- NEPA process, and
- NHPA process.

Rockford, Illinois

GSA and the city formalized a partnership to obtain a well-located brownfield site for the new courthouse, consistent with the city's economic development program and planning goals and with GSA's programmatic needs.

Rockford expedited the site acquisition and provided funds up to \$500,000 from EPA's Brownfields Economic Redevelopment Initiative.



Priorities and Requirements

While federal laws, regulations, and directives contain myriad requirements, it is the responsibility of the Region and the Site Investigation Team to determine the requirements and priorities for each project. The priorities set during the Feasibility Study should be reviewed and confirmed prior to beginning the site selection process.

Additional priorities and requirements may be added as the project progresses and as new policies and directives are implemented.

Schedule

Many site issues can impact the project delivery schedule—from assembling multiple parcels, to relocating displaced owner/occupants and tenants, to mitigating environmental problems. The site's characteristics influence the time needed for data collection and evaluation of environmental and historic conditions (for the NEPA and NHPA processes), negotiation and acquisition, and site preparation (relocation of owner/occupants and tenant studies, remediation, demolition, and construction of infrastructure). Community involvement and support can be effective tools in moving the process forward, and adequate time must be included in the schedule for all of these activities. The project schedule identifies and tracks the critical path for site selection activities. By preparing the project time line and noting key activities and milestones, the team is able to anticipate and plan for potential scheduling issues. Regular status updates of the project schedule support the management of team activities and timely project completion.

Financial Performance

Financial performance is measured in several ways—initial costs, rent rates, life cycle costs, and community costs. The project site has an impact on all of these, especially the initial acquisition costs, which can be substantial, and the construction and operational costs. For this reason, the investigation should include site analysis and studies by a design professional to test the impact of the program on the site before final selection is made. This information is used to determine the infrastructure budget and other site-related costs and to forecast the rent rates, based on the location and quality of the building.

GSA and customer agency financial performance are critical determinants of the success of a project. However, external relationships can impact the project's financial performance as well. Partnerships with local government or developers can contribute other financial resources that can lead to a successful project. These partners may be able to donate a site, share costs, or provide access to additional funding not available to the federal government. GSA is committed to maximizing the return on investment dollars in ways that support the community wherever possible while providing the best site and financial performance to the customer agency.

Conclusion

Excellence in site selection is both a commitment and a process. It is a commitment to provide GSA customers with well-located, high-quality sites for quality workspaces, public spaces, buildings, and landscapes. It is also a process of researching, evaluating, and selecting a site that can best serve the interests of the federal government, the users, and the community.

Site Selection Process

Overview

While initial costs are a significant driver, all of the factors must be considered in order to make the right decision. This Guide is designed to offer assistance to the Site Investigation Team and ensure that all appropriate requirements and best practices are implemented in order to identify the most suitable site for the customer agency and the local community.

For a complete review of the GSA site acquisition process, see *GSA Guidebook 1: Acquisition of Real Property*.

Site selection is a critical step of the overall site acquisition process, which is outlined in *GSA Guidebook 1: Acquisition of Real Property*. *Guidebook 1* is an excellent resource for the complete site acquisition process, including information on appraisals, negotiation, title, closing, and condemnation. This Guide focuses on site selection exclusively.

When does site selection really begin? Site issues are considered early in the capital development process and often are part of preplanning discussions with the customer agency and public officials. During the Feasibility Study, the site acquisition budget is developed for the Site and Design Prospectus. Team members use the informal consultations and preliminary site research to understand the costs of potential sites. At this time, the team also may begin preliminary NEPA and NHPA studies.

Formal site selection commences when the GSA Central Office issues a “Limited Site Directive”; this follows submission of the President’s Budget (which includes the Site and Design Prospectus) to Congress. Typically, there are seven (7) months from the issuance of the Site Directive to the release of funds. Often, this amount of time is insufficient to complete the site investigation and still meet the project schedule. A typical site investigation takes nine (9) months; a more complex one can require much more time. Many projects require site investigative activities such as NEPA studies, meetings with stakeholders, preparation of offers, and so forth.

Informal site investigations are encouraged prior to receiving the Site Directive in order to complete the site investigation process so that site acquisition can occur shortly after funds are released.

The Process

The Regional Offices establish the appropriate site selection process for each project. Until Congress authorizes and appropriates specific site acquisition funds (BA51), the Regions should plan for and provide planning funds (BA61) from the Regional budget. The local Project Team must make the critical decisions and set the criteria for each project. The initial decision as to whether to advertise for sites is vested in the Regional Administrator. The GSA Central Office, including the Office of the Chief Architect, offers expertise on topics related to the larger interest of the federal government and provides support as requested by the Regions. The Site Knowledge Bank also is available for support at all stages of the process.

The site selection process involves a series of data collection and evaluation activities that become more specific in each subsequent step of the site selection process (see Site Selection Process Diagram on page 23). Each step evaluates the suitability of the criteria categories. The evaluations move in a methodical manner, addressing more detailed criteria as the process proceeds. For example, Step 3 looks at macro-level evaluation of the delineated area and identifies “Go/No Go” criteria. Step 4 applies “Go/No Go” criteria as well as other criteria to the long-listed sites. Step 5 uses even more specific criteria to rank the short-listed sites.

The Guide is divided into five chapters, (one for each step of the process), plus a section on troubleshooting, an overview of NEPA activities, and several appendices.

Step 1: Confirm Readiness emphasizes that decisions made during the Feasibility Study should be reviewed and validated prior to commencing detailed site investigations (either formal or informal).

Step 2: Develop the Work Plan reviews the development of a Work Plan and a Communications Plan and the selection of the evaluation criteria.

Step 3: Conduct Search for Sites starts the real work of collecting and analyzing data, finalizing the delineated area and evaluation factors, advertising for sites, and compiling all offers to be evaluated.

Step 4: Evaluate Long List focuses on the analysis of the long list to identify the top three (3) sites for the project.

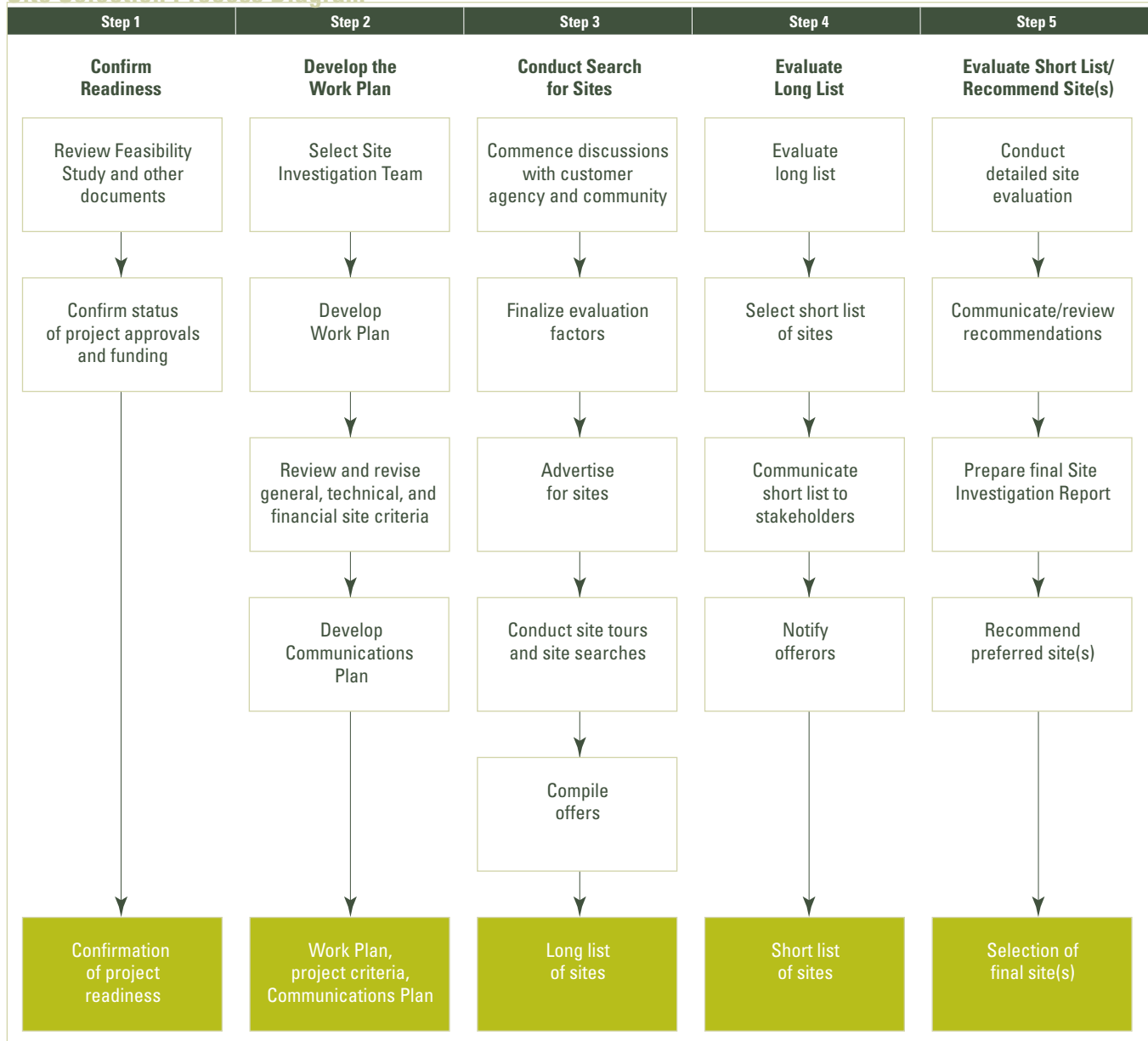
Step 5: Evaluate Short List/Recommend Site(s) describes the detailed evaluation process to develop the recommendation for site selection.

Troubleshooting Guide provides GSA experts’ answers to commonly asked questions about site selection.

NEPA Activities in Site Selection summarizes NEPA requirements regarding environmental protection, including levels of analysis.

Appendices include glossary and definitions, team roles and responsibilities, and a list of professional organizations and resources for site selection.

Site Selection Process Diagram



Step 1: Confirm Readiness

Purpose

The Regional Offices establish the appropriate process for each project, based on the project requirements, expected time needed for site selection, availability and expertise of Regional staff, and other factors. (See Exhibit 1.1: Capital Program Delivery Process.)

The purpose of the readiness review is to assess when to begin the formal and informal site selection activities, to determine whether there are any significant changes in the assumptions of the Feasibility Study and Site and Design Prospectus, and to identify any emerging issues and information that can impact site selection.

A readiness review can identify changes in GSA regulations and programs, local market and real estate development conditions, the mission or operations of the customer agency, or the current availability of sites since the completion of the Feasibility Study. Identifying changes early on allows the Team Leader to plan and manage the schedule, budget, and team resources appropriately.

Recommended Activities

Review Feasibility Study and Other Documents

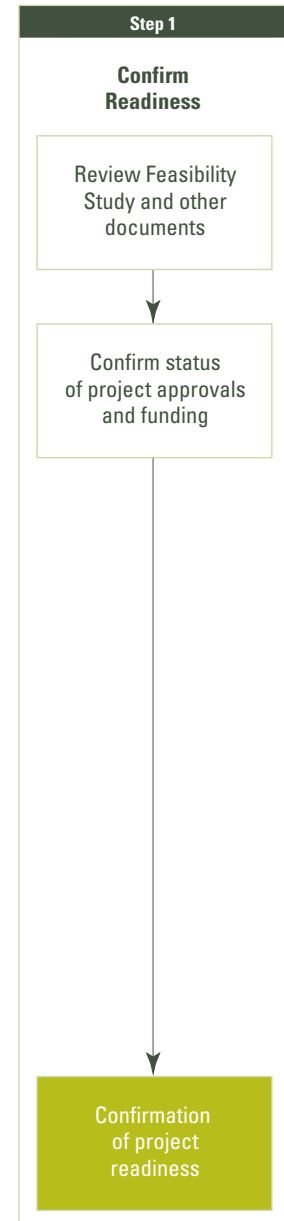
Review the Site and Design Prospectus, Feasibility Study, and Project Management Plan to identify new and unchanged conditions for the project.

Confirm Status of Project Approvals and Funding

Confirm approvals, funding, and schedule for GSA and the customer agency.

Duration

This task typically takes two (2) weeks.



Review Feasibility Study and Other Documents

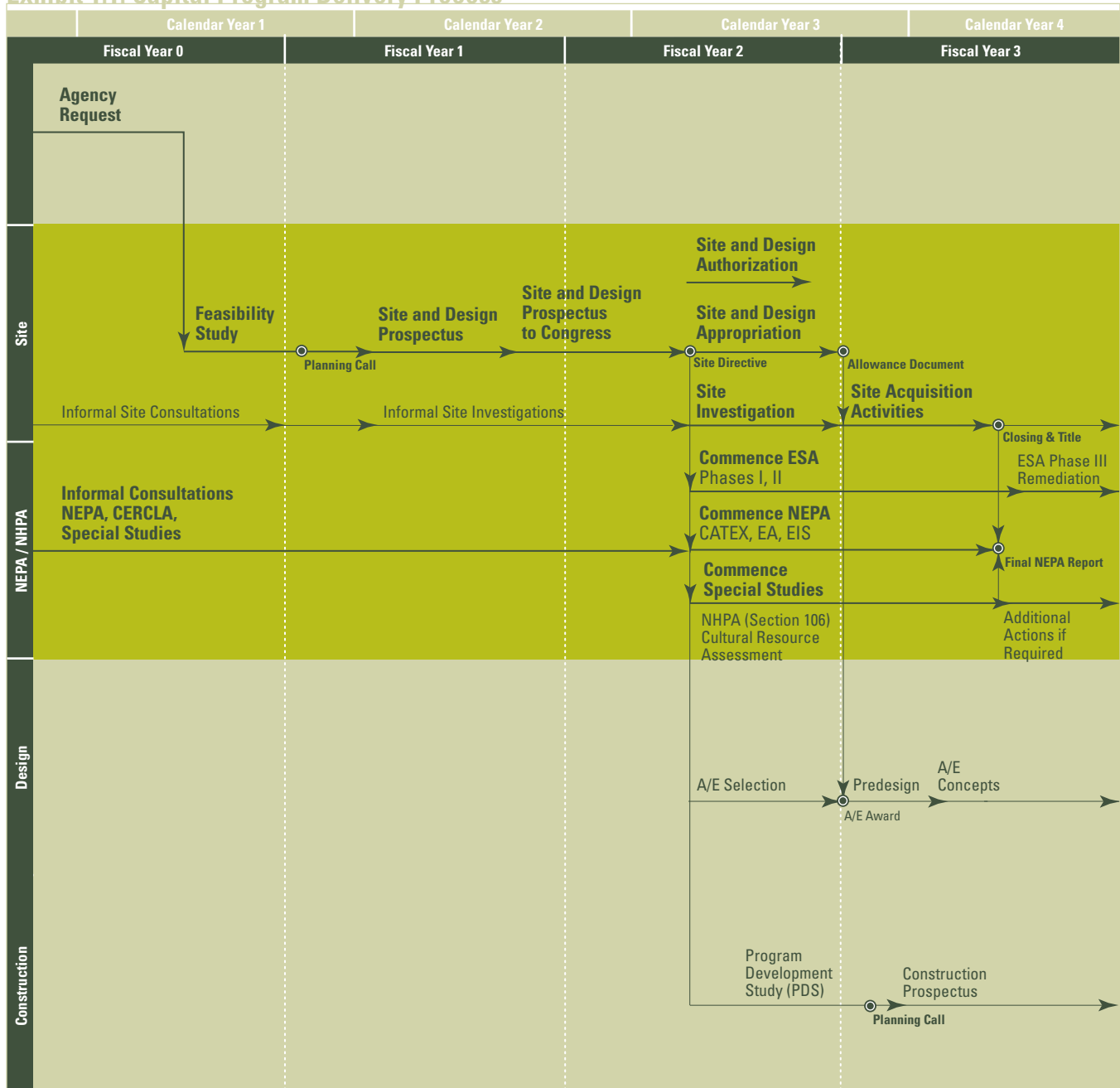
The Feasibility Study (with the Project Management Plan, when available) comprises the business proposal for the project. As part of the capital delivery program, it establishes the design and site acquisition budgets that GSA proposes to Congress. The Feasibility Study reflects all relevant input documents and related information that define the customer agency's operation and facility needs. The study identifies the basic requirements of the project, defines viable alternatives, analyzes the alternatives, evaluates delivery methods, and recommends the preferred solution while taking into account portfolio and facility needs, GSA and customer agency parameters, and financial and technical constraints.

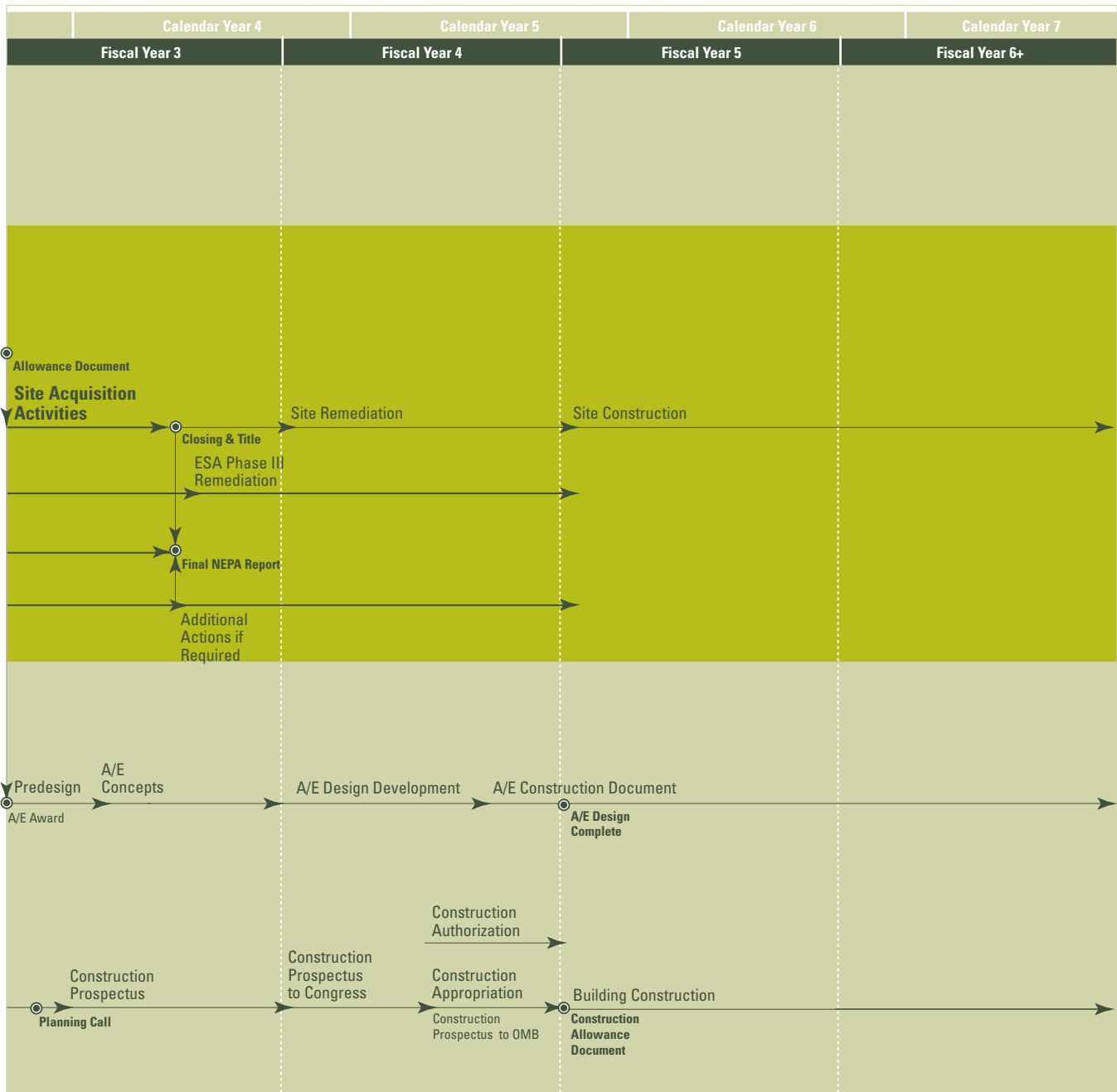
The Team Leader should review the Site and Design Prospectus, the Feasibility Study, and related documents to assess their validity to provide ongoing support for site selection. Identify any topics or assumptions that may need to be modified because of recent changes in the customer agency, local community, or economic conditions. The review also should consider recently enacted changes to GSA programs, initiatives, and federal regulations to identify conditions and factors that have emerged since completion of the Feasibility Study and ensure that such conditions and factors are addressed in the site selection process.

The Team Leader should confirm key project criteria:

- Project requirements;
- Site cost assumptions;
- Relocation cost assumptions;
- Project approvals and funding; and
- Project schedule.

Exhibit 1.1: Capital Program Delivery Process





Recommended Activities

1. Review previously prepared documents and studies and assess the validity and usefulness of this information.
 - Review Feasibility Study to determine any changes to project requirements for the building, parking, and site location; budget and financial analysis; market conditions and development costs; neighborhood and community conditions.
 - Review input documents used to establish the basis for the Feasibility Study. See Exhibit 1.2 for a list of typical input documents.
 - Revalidate the “preferred alternative” identified in the Feasibility Study. If the scope and/or the cost varies significantly from the Feasibility Study’s preferred alternative, then the financial analysis should be reverified as still being the best and preferred solution, using the PBS financial tools. Determine whether the preferred alternative includes donated or purchased sites. Consider how advertising for sites can support the evaluation process.
 - Review the impact of the project on Regional performance measurements, targets, and strategic goals.
 - Determine whether the delineated area has been formally or informally established. Determine whether the Site and Design Prospectus defined a delineated area.
2. Review GSA programs at the Regional and national levels.
 - Identify new GSA policies, directives, or programs.
 - Review any new Executive Orders and federal regulations.
3. Update customer agency requirements.
 - Review program goals and special requirements in light of current agency needs, personnel projections, and operation.
4. Update community stakeholders, local officials, and congressional delegations on project status.
 - Identify and plan to meet with stakeholders to discuss project scope and schedule.

Identify changes to the project conditions, assumptions, and priorities by reviewing the following:

- Previous documents and studies for the project;
- GSA programs, policies, and initiatives; and
- Customer agency mission, operation, and requirements.

After the review, update community stakeholders, local officials, and congressional delegations.

Look for information about the potential for long-lead-time items such as environmental or historic conditions that will generate NEPA and NHPA investigations.

5. Review local real estate conditions.
 - Discuss local market and development conditions. If the Feasibility Study describes a delineated area, then review the neighborhood and market conditions.
 - Discuss any sites (as represented by state and local planning officials or others) that could be donated to the government, are a part of a redevelopment area, and/or could be acquired at a substantial discount or through exchange.
6. Identify items that may impact the scope, schedule and critical path, and team composition, especially long-lead-time items such as NEPA studies and public meetings, NHPA studies, and meetings to build community support.

Outcomes

- Updated project requirements, program goals, and special requirements
- Renewed contact with customer agency and updated input
- Renewed contact with stakeholders and local officials and receipt of their updated input

Duration

This task typically takes one (1) week. Factors impacting duration:

- Time elapsed since Feasibility Study completion
- Team Leader's familiarity with project
- Change in team members and representatives from GSA, customer agency, local officials, and stakeholders.

References

"NEPA Activities in Site Selection"; "Appendix A: Glossary", "Appendix B: Major Federal Laws, Executive Orders, Regulations, and GSA Directives"; "Appendix E: Professional Organizations and Resources for Site Selection"

U.S. General Services Administration, Office of Real Property, March 2001, *Facility Standards for the Public Buildings Service*, www.hydra.gsa.gov/pbs/pc/facilitiesstandards/; U.S. General Services Administration, Office of Governmentwide Policy, Office of Real Property, April 1998, *General Reference Guide for Real Property Policy*, www.gsa.gov/attachments/GSA_PUBLICATIONS/extpub/refguide_1.pdf

Exhibit 1.2: Feasibility Study Input Worksheet

Input Documents ¹	Federal Construction	Lease Construction
Studies/Surveys	■	■
Accessibility Survey	■	■
Agency Requirements/Requests or Judge/Courtroom and "any Court" Analysis (Courthouse only)	■	■
Appraisals	■	
Asset Business Plan		■
Construction Cost Estimate	■	
Cultural Resource Study	■	■
Environmental Studies ²	■	
Fire/Safety Study	■	
Floodplain Analysis	■	■
Hazardous Materials Survey	■	
Housing Plans	■	■
Market Analysis	■	■
Master Plan	■	
Occupancy Agreements	■	■
Parking Study Supplemental Data Sheet	■	■
Site/Geotechnical Studies	■	
Threat/Risk Assessment	■	■
Wetland Determination	■	■
Site Plan	■	■
Cost Form 3596	■	

Note: 1. Not all documents are developed for every project.

2. Studies may include CERCLA, NEPA, and others.

The Office of the Chief Architect issues the Site Directive after the President's Budget is signed and submitted to Congress. The design award and real estate purchase contract(s) are contingent upon project authorization and funding appropriation by Congress and necessary for the acquisition and purchase of the site. The Allowance Document transfers the appropriated funds to the Region.

Confirm Status of Project Approvals and Funding

After the Site and Design Prospectus is prepared and enters the review and approval cycle, each Region decides when to begin preliminary site investigations. The timing reflects preferences of the Regional Office, the complexity of the project requirements, and potential acquisition strategies. In the past, some Regions waited until the Site Directive or Allowance Document was issued to begin site selection. This is not recommended because it can create a significant delay in the provision of the facility.

Until specific site acquisition funds (BA51) are authorized and appropriated by Congress, the Regions should plan for and provide planning funds (BA61) from the Regional budget. The availability and the amount of funding should be reviewed at this time. Check the Site and Design Prospectus budget and the source of funding for preliminary site investigations.

Recommended Activities

Review the Site and Design Prospectus for the amount of funding requested. Verify progress of the site and design authorization and appropriation and identify the date for the release of funds for design and site acquisition.

Confirm the availability of funds to carry out preliminary site investigation activities, especially those activities that may precede receipt of the Allowance Document. Preliminary site selection funds may be available from the Region's Budget Activity 61 (BA61) funds or through an RWA from the customer agency. Common site selection expenses may include travel and contractors. Step 2 (Develop the Work Plan) of the Guide provides more information about identifying contractors for the project.

Outcome

Confirmation of amount and type of funding for site selection

Duration

This task typically takes one (1) week.

Step 2: Develop the Work Plan

Purpose

The Site Selection Work Plan is an important project management tool. The site selection process is complex and requires careful management of the schedule, budget, and team resources. Creating and using the Work Plan establishes a framework for organizing and leading the site selection effort.

Composing a Site Selection Work Plan can:

- Provide guidance to ensure that site selection is performed accurately and completely;
- Ensure that the appropriate experts and professionals participate at the right time;
- Complete the site selection tasks in an efficient manner; and
- Keep stakeholders informed and aid in reaching consensus for the recommended sites(s).

Recommended Activities

Select Site Investigation Team

Develop a project-staffing plan that addresses roles, responsibilities, reporting structures, and decision-makers. The plan also should identify at what point in the process each member joins the team.

Develop Work Plan

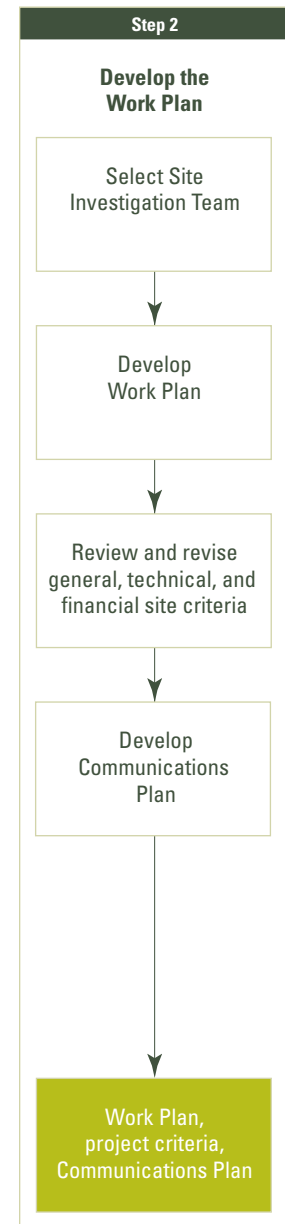
Develop a Work Plan that addresses scope, schedule, approval process, and budget.

Review and Revise General, Technical, and Financial Site Criteria

Review and customize site selection criteria for the specific needs of the project, customer agency, location, and budget.

Develop Communications Plan

Develop a communications strategy that informs the customer agency, GSA, local community, congressional delegations, and other stakeholders of the process, activities, and results.



GSA always provides the leadership and “in-house” subject matter expertise on site selection, even if some expertise and roles are outsourced.

When determining team composition, it is important to consider the following:

- Appropriate team size;
- Availability of GSA staff or contractors to fill roles;
- GSA Central Office participation;
- Need for outside experts; and
- Nature of the project, the location, and the potential sites.

Don’t forget to include a Communications Specialist to assist with both political and media concerns.

Duration

This task typically takes two (2) weeks. Factors impacting duration:

- The project type and location (Some properties will need more analysis and require more specialized evaluation than others. For example, dense urban sites or brownfield properties may require greater investigation on historic preservation, renovation, or remediation efforts.)
- Customer agency participation and expectations
- Ability of Team Leader to manage the process based on experience, workload, and support

Select Site Investigation Team

A strong and competent Project Team contributes more to successful site selection than any other item identified in this Guide.

The Asset Business Team is organized by Portfolio during initial project planning and is responsible for project creation. In the early stages, the Asset/Portfolio Manager typically leads the team, which comprises representatives from major GSA disciplines and the customer agency. The Asset Business Team evolves into the Project Team. This team brings in particular specialties (as contractor/consultants or as team members), based on the individual needs of the project. When the project scope is fully identified, the Project Team is restructured. Led by a Project Manager, the reorganized team includes other members, such as an appraiser, Urban Development Officer, or Historic Preservation Officer, as required. The Project Manager designates a Team Leader, as appropriate, for project planning and delivery. The Team Leader develops the Work Plan and the Communications Plan.

The Site Investigation Team can be viewed as a subset of the overall Project Team. The Project Manager manages the overall construction project and ensures that each program subteam has the necessary resources and assistance to accomplish their “part” of the project. The program areas such as procurement and sites, which are subsets of the overall project, also may have Team Leaders, that is, the Site Investigation Team Leader leads the Site Investigation Team and coordinates acquisition and relocation of real property.

Staffing for the project addresses roles, responsibilities, reporting structures, and decision-making authority. The size of a Site Investigation Team is determined by the complexity of the project. The composition is dependent on which GSA staff are available, what expertise must be contracted, and when team members' expertise is required.

Recommended Activities

1. Identify the Team Leader (usually a Portfolio Manager or Site Acquisition Contracting Officer from the Region); select members for the Site Investigation Team, including core GSA team members (ideally continuing from the Feasibility Study effort); and choose a Program Coordinator from the GSA Central Office.
2. Write the project-staffing plan. This plan should include roles, responsibilities, functions, and a detailed list of activities and should articulate decision-making and leadership/management responsibilities. (See Exhibit 2.1: Site Investigation Team Member Worksheet for potential team members.) Use the tools in "Appendix C: Site Investigation Team Roles/Responsibilities and Worksheet" for a description of team member roles and responsibilities and for help when mapping team member responsibilities. Identify requirements for contractors to support the Site Investigation Team.
3. Initiate the selection of contractors and manage their participation. Contracted services may include architectural programming, real estate market surveys, real estate appraisals, NEPA and environmental site assessments, NHPA and historic preservation and cultural investigations, civil engineering, and other specialty functions.

Outcomes

- Identification and definition of team members and contractor roles
- The right expertise on the team

Duration

This task typically takes two (2) weeks.

References

"Appendix C: Site Investigation Team Roles/Responsibilities and Worksheet"

GSA Guidebook 1: Acquisition of Real Property, "Chapter 1, Section 2: Authority"; "Chapter 1, Section 3: Site Selection Criteria"; "Chapter 1, Section 13: Site Acquisition Report" (especially the notes about team composition); "Chapter 1, Section 14: Responsibilities of the Site Specialist"

Site Investigation Teams (including any GSA Central Office members) should have regular meetings with Regional Management (ARA or RA).

Team Leaders and members should have access to and be familiar with *GSA Guidebook 1: Acquisition of Real Property*, which offers a comprehensive look at all aspects of the process.

Exhibit 2.1: Site Investigation Team Member Worksheet

Site Investigation Team: GSA

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Team Leader | <input type="checkbox"/> Site Selection Specialist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contracting Officer | <input type="checkbox"/> Project Manager |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Property Development Manager | <input type="checkbox"/> Portfolio Manager |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Regional Counsel | <input type="checkbox"/> Regional Historic Preservation Officer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Office of the Chief Architect Representatives | <input type="checkbox"/> Other GSA Specialists |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Center for Courthouse Programs | <input type="checkbox"/> Archaeologist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Border Station Center | <input type="checkbox"/> Architect |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Development Specialist | <input type="checkbox"/> Civil Engineer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Program Coordinator | <input type="checkbox"/> Appraiser |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Regional Environmental Quality Advisor |

Site Investigation Team: Customer Agency

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Administrative Services Representative | <input type="checkbox"/> Human Resources Representative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> National Office Representative | <input type="checkbox"/> Real Estate Group Representative |

Site Investigation Team: Contractor/Consultant

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architect | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architect |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic/Cultural Preservation Consultant | <input type="checkbox"/> Archaeologist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Code Review Expert | <input type="checkbox"/> Geotechnical Engineer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Civil Engineer | <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Engineer (Conservation) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Structural Engineer (Seismic) | <input type="checkbox"/> Security/Blast Assessment Consultant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Traffic Engineer | <input type="checkbox"/> Biologist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hydrologist | <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Scientist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial Hygienist | <input type="checkbox"/> Real Estate Broker |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Real Estate Appraiser | <input type="checkbox"/> Cost Estimator |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Constructability Advisor | <input type="checkbox"/> Demographic Analyst |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Labor Analyst | <input type="checkbox"/> Local Tax Advisor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Title Search Consultant | <input type="checkbox"/> Acquisition Law Advisor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Financial Advisor (Negotiation of Transaction) | <input type="checkbox"/> Zoning Attorney |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Land Use Planner | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planner |

Exhibit 2.2: Site Selection Process Schedule

Task Name	Duration
Step 1: Confirm Readiness	2 weeks
Review Feasibility Study and other documents	1 week
Confirm status of project approvals and funding	1 week
Step 2: Develop the Work Plan	2 weeks
Select Site Investigation Team	2 weeks
Develop Work Plan	2 weeks
Review and revise general, technical, and financial site criteria	2 weeks
Develop Communications Plan	2 weeks
Step 3: Conduct Search for Sites	9 weeks
Commence discussions with customer agency and community	4 weeks
Finalize evaluation factors	1 week
<i>Commence NEPA, ESA, NHPA, and other special studies</i>	4 weeks
Advertise for sites	5 weeks
Conduct site tours and site searches	2 weeks
Compile offers	1 week
Step 4: Evaluate Long List	3 weeks
<i>Continue NEPA, ESA, NHPA studies</i>	3 weeks
Evaluate long list	1 week
Select short list of sites	1 week
Communicate short list to stakeholders	1 week
Notify offerors	1 week
Step 5: Evaluate Short List/Recommend Site(s)	25 weeks
Conduct detailed site evaluation	17 weeks
<i>Draft NEPA, NHPA reports for preferred site and other short-listed sites</i>	8 weeks
<i>Site evaluation—ESA Phase I</i>	5 weeks
<i>Site evaluation—ESA Phase II</i>	8 weeks
<i>Evaluate sites—prepare technical rankings</i>	2 weeks
Communicate/review recommendations	1 week
Prepare final Site Investigation Report	4 weeks
Recommend preferred site(s)	1 week

Develop Work Plan

Develop a detailed Site Selection Work Plan. Review the Project Management Plan (PMP) and coordinate the site investigation activities with it. The Work Plan is a key tool that the team can use to manage the work. The plan can be shared with the customer agency and some stakeholders to explain the process and its requirements, as well as the schedule.

Recommended Activities

1. Develop the project budget. Evaluate funding (BA61 or RWA) for contractors, travel, and other expenses. Determine whether funds are sufficient for the project needs. Review site acquisition budget and update as necessary. Review procurement requirements in order to bring in contractors on schedule.
2. Review project characteristics. Identify key factors about the project or the location that impact the Work Plan. Document project history and local context. Verify coordination with other completed or ongoing studies. Review project requirements and location characteristics to identify key criteria that impact scope, schedule, and budget.
3. Update the site selection schedule. Review typical schedule milestones. Determine whether there are any long-lead-time items, such as NEPA, NHPA, or other special studies or lengthy negotiations with community groups, that have a strong influence on scope, schedule, budget, or team composition. Include time for team meetings, GSA and customer agency review periods, and vacations.
4. Use Exhibit 2.2: Site Selection Process Schedule as an initial planning baseline for typical schedule and task durations. Determine how this project deviates from Exhibit 2.2 to develop an appropriate time line and schedule, as every project and process is unique in some aspect. Identify and commit to major site selection milestones.
5. Identify project approval processes. Review the approval processes for GSA, the customer agency, local government, and others. Determine typical time frames and milestones. Add this information to the project schedule and understand coordination requirements.
6. Establish project management controls for site investigation in coordination with the PMP. Plan how to work together as a team and how to manage the release of predecisional information, including the budget and schedule. Identify measures of success or project performance metrics.
7. Update the project directory from the PMP to include all GSA and customer agency representatives, local officials, and other team members.

The Work Plan includes information in the following areas:

- Staff,
- Schedule,
- Scope,
- Budget,
- Approvals,
- Controls, and
- Communications.

Typical site selection activities average nine (9) months to complete. Longer, more complex site selections may require two (2) years to complete.

Determine when to initiate contracting for NEPA, NHPA (Section 106), and other required documentation.

There are three categories of site selection criteria:

- Project requirements,
- Technical factors, and
- Financial factors.

8. Review the draft Work Plan with key stakeholders, including the customer agency, GSA Regional Office, and GSA Central Office. Confirm coordination requirements within GSA and among GSA, tenant agencies, and other outside organizations. Provide a clear understanding of roles, responsibilities, and time frames for activities. Determine major project concerns, limitations, and key milestones involved in site selection, scheduling, funding, procurement, and so forth.

Duration

This task typically takes two (2) weeks.

Outcomes

- Confirmation of scope of site selection activities
- Establishment of approval process and participants
- Definition of schedule and milestones
- Validation of budget

References

“Troubleshooting Guide”; “NEPA Activities in Site Selection”; “Appendix C: Site Investigation Team Roles/Responsibilities and Worksheet”

GSA Guidebook 1: Acquisition of Real Property, “Chapter 1, Section 2: Authority”; “Chapter 1, Section 3: Site Selection Criteria”; “Chapter 1, Section 4: Site Sustainability Considerations”; “Chapter 1, Section 5: Environmental Justice”; “Chapter 1, Section 13: Site Acquisition Report” (especially the notes about team composition); “Appendix 18: Specifications for GSA Site Investigation Report: GSA Form 1433”; “Appendix 19: Site Acquisition Time Line”; “Appendix 20: Utilities List Form”; “Appendix 21: Site Investigation—List of Items Needed”; “Appendix 22: Tabulation of Undesirable Characteristics”; “Appendix 23: Construction Management Site Data Inventory: GSA Form 1239”

Review and Revise General, Technical, and Financial Site Criteria

The site selection process comprises a series of data collection and evaluation activities. Appropriate criteria topics are identified for each project and used as an evaluation framework. The criteria topics always must be selected based on each project’s need and each community’s offerings of sites. As a result, there are no universal lists of criteria for every site selection. The evaluation framework is developed each time. This evaluation framework ensures that each site selection is based on a complete and correct set of criteria. Each step uses the framework, but the criteria may become more specific as the process proceeds, defining the evaluation standard in each step.

This Guide includes four criteria checklists to help review and define the appropriate evaluation criteria for each step of the process. Each checklist uses three categories of criteria:

- **Project requirements** are based on the customer agency's needs, facility and parking requirements, and operation.
- **Technical factors** reflect technical functions such as best practices in site design, architecture, and facility construction and operation; as well as federal requirements and policies, including historic preservation, sustainability, and so forth.
- **Financial factors** are those that contribute to the facility's design, construction, and operation.

Each of these three categories comprises a series of subcategory topics, which are included in every checklist. Examples of the type of criteria and the level of evaluation are provided in the checklist for each step. Remember that not every criteria topic is needed for every project.

Recommended Activities

1. Review Exhibit 2.3: Site Selection Criteria Category Checklist to identify the criteria categories appropriate for this project and to eliminate categories that are not needed. The criteria categories are offered as a menu of possibilities. It is unlikely that a project requires all of the categories. Make sure to refer to the Feasibility Study for local and site factors previously identified.
2. Prioritize the major criteria. Consider how the type and importance of criteria for this project may impact the Work Plan and success of the site selection.
3. Identify potential topics for future NEPA, NHPA, and special studies. Determine whether contractors or GSA specialists should be brought on board to support the Site Investigation Team.

Outcomes

- Identification of the site selection criteria categories early in the Work Plan
- Fine-tuning of the team's effort, based on the project and location

Duration

This task typically takes two (2) weeks.

References

“NEPA Activities in Site Selection”; “Appendix B: Major Federal Laws, Executive Orders, Regulations, and GSA Directives”

GSA Guidebook 1: Acquisition of Real Property, “Appendix 1: Fact Sheet on Summaries of NEPA, Associated Laws, and Executive Orders”; “Appendix 2: Fact Sheet—Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA)”; “Appendix 3: Statutes, Regulations, and Administrative Directives That Influence and Control Site Selection”; “Appendix 4: List of Regional Environmental Specialists”; “Appendix 5: Examples of Site Selection Criteria”; “Appendix 6: E.O. 12072—Federal Space Management”; “Appendix 7: Fact Sheet on E.O. 11988—Floodplain Management”; “Appendix 8: P-100—Facilities Standards and Site Planning Criteria” (excerpts); “Appendix 9: U.S. Courts Design Guide” (excerpts); “Appendix 10: Commissioner Robert Peck’s Memorandum to Assistant Regional Administrators, dated July 31, 1998, Implementation of E.O. 13006—Locating Federal Facilities on Historic Properties in Our Nation’s Central Cities”; “Appendix 11: Fact Sheet—Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)”; “Appendix 12: Fact Sheet—GSA Policy on Environmental Justice”

U.S. General Services Administration, Office of Real Property, March 2001, *Facilities Standards for the Public Buildings Service*, www.hydra.gsa.gov/pbs/pc/facilitiesstandards/; U.S. General Services Administration, Office of Governmentwide Policy, Office of Real Property, April 1998, *General Reference Guide for Real Property Policy*, www.gsa.gov/attachments/GSA_PUBLICATIONS/extpub/refguide_1.pdf; American Institute of Architects, 1994, *The Architect’s Handbook of Professional Practice: Site Analysis (Section 3.62) “Chapter 2”*, Washington, DC: AIA

Develop Communications Plan

Effective communications bring important benefits to the project by managing customer agency, stakeholder, and community expectations; building consensus; supporting the project schedule; and enhancing coordination within the team and with the customer agency. The Communications Specialist team member can assist the Team Leader and others with these activities.

Recommended Activities

1. Understand the context of the project and the community.
 - Review previous communications approaches and strategies. Review contacts made with federal, state, and local agencies during the Feasibility Study.
 - Review project and local history, local issues, and activities that may create interest or controversy around the project, such as local elections and other development activities.
 - Identify key stakeholders in terms of the following:
 - Organization (size and structure);
 - Project stake;
 - Level of influence;
 - Issues of interest; and
 - Leaders and spokespersons, for contact information.

Exhibit 2.3: Site Selection Criteria Category Checklist

Project Requirements

Required Site Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Minimum/Maximum Area• Expansion Capabilities
Location Preferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Delineated Area Boundaries• Adjacencies
Site Coverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Building Footprint Area• Parking• Circulation and Open Space
Security Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Setbacks• Entry Control• Site Access
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Redevelopment and Rehabilitation Potential• Alternative Transit Availability• Energy Efficiency or Reduction in Usage• Habitat Preservation or Improvement• LEED Credit Potential
Neighborhood Character/ Immediate Surroundings	
Traffic and Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public Transit/Walkability• Service Access• Public Parking• Traffic Capacity
Image and Visibility	
Local Planning Requirements/ Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Land Use Plans• Local Initiatives
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Site and Design Prospectus
Schedule	

Technical Factors

Physical Elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Site Context/Location• Hydrology/Topography• Physical Features• Existing Improvements and Buildings• Vegetation and Landscape• Archaeological Features• Environmental Hazards• Threatened, Rare, and Endangered Species
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Technical Factors (cont.)

Zoning and Local Codes

Public Streets and Alleys, Drives, Curbs and Walks

Subsurface/Geotechnical Conditions

Seismic Conditions/Requirements

Energy Conservation/Utilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Water• Electric• Gas• Voice and Data
--------------------------------------	---

Sewer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sanitary Sewer• Storm Drainage
--------------	---

Historic Preservation/Site History	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Historic Preservation Eligibility or Designation• Former Site Uses, History of Existing Structures• Local Groups
---	--

Existing Use, Ownership, and Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Current Uses• Adjacent Uses• Type of Land Ownership• Function and Pattern of Land Use
---	--

Community Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Location, Type, and Size
---------------------------	--

Financial Factors

Site Acquisition and Relocation Costs

Demolition/Remediation Costs

Site Construction and Preparation Costs

Infrastructure Improvements

Local Economic Development Impact

Funding Sources Through Partnering

GSA Financial Performance

2. Develop a schedule of planned communications around project milestones, such as activity commencement and completion dates. Develop a protocol for tracking and responding to potential problems.
3. Identify communications venues that may be used to distribute information about the project, such as the following:
 - GSA Web site.
 - Customer agency Web site or newsletter.
 - City or local customer agency Web site.
 - Local newspapers, TV, and radio.
 - Local interest newsletters and Web sites.
4. Summarize this information and prepare the Communications Plan. Review the Communication Plan with the Site Investigation Team and the communications staff for the Region, GSA Central Office, and customer agency.

Outcome

- Communications Plan with analysis of stakeholders, potential issues, and media venues

Duration

This typically takes two (2) weeks. Factors impacting duration:

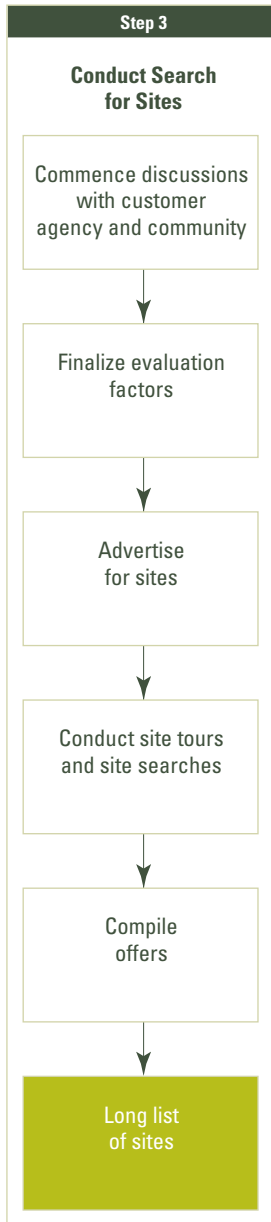
- Number of stakeholders
- Size and scope of project
- Volatility of issues

References

"Appendix E: Professional Organizations and Resources for Site Selection"

U.S. General Services Administration, Office of Real Property, October 2001, *Real Estate and Workplace Contacts Directory: A Guide to Real Estate Contacts in the Federal Government, International Organizations, and Related Association*, www.gsa.gov/attachments/GSA_PUBLICATIONS/pub/Contactsdir_2001.pdf

Step 3: Conduct Search for Sites



Purpose

GSA's site selection process supports effective and efficient performance of the customer agency's missions and programs. Additionally, the process provides an opportunity to support federal policies for sustainability, community planning, historic preservation, and environmental quality in the delineation of the search area and the development of criteria chosen to identify successful sites.

There is no legal requirement that GSA obtain competition in selecting sites for public buildings. However, soliciting for sites is one way of "proving" that the chosen alternative is the best one. The evaluation process should be completed regardless of how the site is obtained in order to document the rationale for the selection. This methodical analysis will answer many questions often asked by Congress, OMB, and the taxpayer regarding how the site was selected.

The search for potential sites requires an understanding of GSA's real property acquisition procedures, as well as familiarity with real estate and development activities in the local community. Examining a variety of sites demonstrates that the selected site offers the government the best site for all factors considered. This process also provides viable second- and third-choice sites. If the preferred site is eliminated later, then these alternative sites can be used, without restarting the site selection process and adversely impacting the schedule. The examined sites may include sites presented by offerors, identified by the Site Investigation Team, or used in the Feasibility Study. This step describes the activities necessary to complete the search for sites and the evaluation of the site offers.

Recommended Activities

Commence Discussions With Customer Agency and Community

Through discussions with the customer agency and local community, identify appropriate areas and potential sites, define evaluation and other factors, and understand the potential to support local planning and development activities.

Finalize Evaluation Factors

Conduct background investigations to define the evaluation factors and ensure that they comply with customer location requirements, federal mandates, Prospectus limitations, and best practices.

Advertise for Sites

Determine the delineated area for site selection based on project requirements, plus technical and financial factors. Prepare and issue an advertisement for site offers, including donated sites, in accordance with GSA policies and procedures. Review site offers for completion.

Conduct Site Tours and Site Searches

Tour the local marketplace, view the delineated area, and identify potential sites.

Compile Offers

Compile information from submitted offers and all other sources to establish the long list of potential sites.

Duration

This task typically takes nine (9) weeks.

Commence Discussions With Customer Agency and Community

Through discussions with the customer agency and local community, identify appropriate areas and potential sites, define evaluation and other factors, and understand the potential to support local planning and development activities.

Recommended Activities

1. Meet with the customer agency and local community and engage key stakeholders, including the customer agency, GSA Central Office, local government, local planning agencies, community groups, and congressional delegation.

During the meeting(s), review project goals and local development goals to identify possible synergy. Request comments on potential delineated areas and sites, as well as on evaluation factors, to ensure that the process identifies several possible sites. Use Exhibit 3.1: Sample Agenda to help prepare for the meeting(s).
2. Keep minutes or other reports for all meetings and phone calls. Coordinate all contact with local authorities with the appropriate GSA Regional staff and communicate regularly with the Regional Administrator. The Team Leader should be the control point for all communications.

3. Meet with representatives of local government and civic organizations, including zoning boards, health departments, fine arts commissions, fire marshals, regional planning commissions, and local/urban design review boards, to ascertain development issues. In these meetings, explore the potential to leverage federal and local development efforts and to fine-tune the evaluation factors in support of the project and local needs.
4. Contact the state environmental agency and State Historic Preservation Office, when appropriate, and begin to discuss the potential sites' compliance with state policy, programs, and regulations.
5. Discuss the needs for publicity, press releases, and other communications activities. Determine who will issue information and how inquiries and potential problems will be addressed. Review schedules for internal and external communications milestones.

Outcomes

- Trust and development of consensus aided through ongoing dialogue with all project stakeholders
- Definition of delineated area based on local knowledge, customer and local input, and the process
- Identification of potential sites

Duration

This task typically takes four (4) weeks. Factors impacting duration:

- Total number of meetings to be scheduled with agencies and groups
- Characteristics of the potential delineated area
- Shared or competing nature of local groups and agencies
- Time frame to plan and develop the potential for synergistic partnerships with local government, community groups, and developers

Exhibit 3.1: Sample Agenda

Meeting With Customer Agency or Community

1. Introduce those in attendance
2. Review description of government project
3. Briefly describe overall process, including earlier Feasibility Study and other studies
4. Review current site selection activities, purpose, outcome, and schedule
5. Inquire about the local program and planning activities that may be supported or impacted
6. Review potential delineated area and potential sites
7. Identify potential opportunities and pitfalls
8. Identify additional sites
9. Assign next steps
 - Collect further data
 - Plan additional meetings

Fine-tune the sample agenda, based on project history and time line.

Consider these points in preparing for your meeting(s):

- Are the meeting participants familiar with the proposed project and the Feasibility Study?
- Have they been involved in site acquisition for other projects?
- What is the previous working relationship between this group and GSA and the Team Leader? Is this a first-time meeting or a follow-up?
- What are the local impacts of the project? Consider the impact on taxes, job creation, growth, revitalization, and other local issues.
- Has there been any previous community involvement? Will any be planned?

“The Government will select the site considered most advantageous to the United States, all factors considered. In order to ensure that the selected site is most advantageous to the United States, the Government also will consider any unique attributes or other nuances of a site deemed worthy of consideration.”

GSA Guidebook 1: Acquisition of Real Property

Sample Minimum “Go/No Go” Requirements

- Is the site within the delineated area?
- Does the offeror control the site (through ownership) or hold a valid option?
- Can the minimum square footage required for the facility be accommodated on site?

Finalize Evaluation Factors

At this point, the process moves from discussing needs and possibilities to describing initial evaluation requirements for the project site. Identifying the appropriate evaluation factors is the initial level of site selection.

Minimum Requirements and General Evaluation Factors

Minimum requirements and general evaluation factors are used to evaluate sites (and are included in the advertisement for sites). Both help to determine whether the offered site is adequate for the agency’s needs, function, and operation.

The minimum requirements and the general evaluation factors may be drawn from any of the categories of criteria found in Exhibit 3.2: Criteria Categories for the Delineated Area. The weight that the criteria receive in the evaluation distinguishes the criteria defined as minimum requirements from those used as general evaluation factors. The criteria weight may vary for each project and site.

Minimum requirements must be satisfied. These factors are mission critical and are rated as a simple “Go/No Go.” If the site complies with the minimum requirements, then it can be considered further; if it does not, then it is eliminated. Only those factors that are absolutely essential should be defined in this manner.

General evaluation factors identify desirable attributes, but not necessarily essential factors. The ability of each site to satisfy the factors is evaluated, and factors may be prioritized or ranked against each other.

Cost considerations identify each site’s impact on the proposed cost of acquiring, constructing, and operating the site and the facility.

Recommended Activities

1. Collect data about the potential project and project area to select the appropriate criteria. Become aware of the types of environmental, historic, cultural, and archaeological resources present. Their presence or absence may indicate the type and amount of effort needed for the NEPA and NHPA evaluation of the short-listed sites. Be sure to review those federal policies and Executive Orders that have an impact on the criteria chosen for this project. Plan for preliminary data collection based on this knowledge. Become familiar with local infrastructure systems and their capacity to support the project.

2. Use Exhibit 3.2: Criteria Categories for the Delineated Area as a checklist to review potential project requirements, technical factors, and financial factors that may be satisfied by the project area. Choose the criteria categories that are appropriate for each project, the customer agency, and the community; not every type of criteria listed is relevant for every project.
3. Finalize evaluation criteria. The criteria should be written specifically for each project, based on local conditions, customer agency requirements, GSA policies and guidelines, and other technical requirements.

Outcome

- Determination of minimum requirements and general evaluation factors representing the correct criteria for site selection

Duration

This task typically takes one (1) week.

References

"NEPA Activities in Site Selection"; "Appendix B: Major Federal Laws, Executive Orders, Regulations, and GSA Directives"

GSA Guidebook 1: Acquisition of Real Property, "Appendix 1: Fact Sheet on Summaries of NEPA, Associated Laws, and Executive Orders"; "Appendix 3: Statutes, Regulations, and Administrative Directives That Influence and Control Site Selection"; "Appendix 5: Examples of Site Selection Criteria"; "Appendix 14: Examples of Advertisements for Sites"; "Appendix 21: Site Investigation—List of Items Needed"

U.S. General Services Administration, Office of Governmentwide Policy, Office of Real Property, April 1998, *General Reference Guide for Real Property Policy*, www.gsa.gov/attachments/GSA_PUBLICATIONS/extpub/refguide_1.pdf

Sample Cost Considerations

- Comparison of \$/sf;
- Additional cost for extension of infrastructure;
- Greater time to acquire; and
- Impact of parcel configuration on efficiency of layout.

Sample General Evaluation Factors

- Are floodplains present on the site?
- Does the site include historic structures that can be utilized for the required program?
- Does the site include unbuildable areas?

Exhibit 3.2: Criteria Categories for the Delineated Area

Project Requirements

Required Site Area	<p>Define minimum/maximum site area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site Geometry • Site Contiguity <p>Define expansion capabilities</p>
Location Preferences	Define delineated area proximities and adjacencies, based on project requirements & technical factors
Site Coverage	Define site coverage and open space requirements
Security Requirements	Define setbacks and other security requirements
Sustainability	<p>Review redevelopment and rehabilitation potential</p> <p>Analyze alternative transit availability</p> <p>Evaluate energy efficiency or reduction in usage</p> <p>Consider habitat preservation or improvement</p> <p>Determine LEED credit potential</p>
Neighborhood Character/ Immediate Surroundings	<p>Establish neighborhood compatibility with proposed use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Favorable/Unfavorable Surroundings • Improving/Declining Neighborhood • Demographics
Traffic & Transportation	<p>Define requirements/proximity for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Transit/Walkability • Bike Paths • Public Parking Areas • Overall Road/Traffic Capacity
Image & Visibility	Establish appropriate character/image for project
Local Planning Requirements/ Initiatives	<p>Determine consistency with comprehensive land use plan</p> <p>Determine potential to support local planning initiatives</p>
Budget	Review Prospectus and Allowance Documents
Schedule	Determine site availability requirements

Exhibit 3.2: Criteria Categories for the Delineated Area (cont.)

Technical Factors

Site Context/Location Information

- Review context from
- Area Map and Aerial Photos
 - Local Street and Topographic Maps
 - City Master Planning Map(s)

Preview project impact on local goals, programs, and issues

Physical Elements

- Hydrology
Check for:
- Existing Floodplains and Watersheds
 - Wetlands
 - Drainage Problems
 - Stream Valley Buffers

- Topography
- Determine Impact on Development Patterns

- Physical Features
- Identify Unique Features or Landmarks
 - Identify Existing Improvements and Buildings
 - Evaluate Potential of Existing Structures

- Vegetation and Landscape
- Evaluate Potential of Existing Vegetation and Landscape

- Archaeological Features
- Determine Known Archaeological/Cultural Districts/Areas

- Environmental Hazards
- Determine Known Hazards

- Threatened, Rare, and Endangered Species
- Determine Existence of Known Species

- Sustainability
- Determine Consistency With Sustainable Design Principles

- Conservation Program and Regulations
- Determine Known Conservation Regulations, Initiatives, and Areas

Zoning and Local Codes	Determine overall impact of local codes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Height Restrictions • Floor Area Ratio • Setback Requirements • Parking Ratios
Public Streets and Alleys	Determine special requirements for roadways and streets
Subsurface/Geotechnical Conditions	Determine local geotechnical, subsurface, and soil conditions
Seismic Conditions/Requirements	Determine state and local seismic requirements/parameters/zones
Energy Conservation/Utilities	Determine utility/infrastructure requirements for project Assess local systems' capacities and conditions
Sewer	Determine local sanitary sewer capacity and condition Determine local storm water regulations and capacity
Historic Preservation/Site History	Determine existing historic or cultural districts Identify local historic planning groups and programs
Existing Use, Ownership, and Control	Determine impacts of existing use, ownership, and control
Community Services	Establish proximity requirements to community services

Financial Factors

Site Acquisition and Relocation Costs	Establish site acquisition budget
Demolition/Remediation Costs	Establish range of site demolition/remediation costs
Site Construction and Preparation Costs	Establish range of site construction and preparation costs
Infrastructure Improvements	Review plans for local infrastructure improvements
Local Economic Development Impact	Establish target local economic development impact goals
Funding Sources Through Partnering	Establish target funding levels/percentages through partnering
GSA Financial Performance	Establish GSA financial performance targets

Note: This checklist is not exhaustive. Each project and each location will have unique factors. Use this checklist as a starting point to select the most appropriate factors for each project.

Advertise for Sites

Soliciting or advertising for sites is a way of demonstrating, through comparison and evaluation, that one alternative is the best one. No matter how the site is obtained, the evaluation process always must be completed.

If an acceptable site is identified for donation or exchange by a local government or if the federal government already has an acceptable site, then the advertising process may not be necessary. The Region makes the final determination with input from the PM and Site Investigation Team Leader whether to advertise for sites. (For more detail, see the “Troubleshooting Guide,” Managing the Acquisition: Does the site selection process require a competitive procurement?) When a site is not advertised, it is not necessary to establish a delineated area.

The advertising for a site focuses on a particular area suitable for the project. Typically, the site search delineated area is the central business area unless the customer agency has location requirements that justify a site outside that area. The choice of one area over another may create opportunities for both the project and the community. Some project requirements, technical factors, or financial factors may be satisfied by the choice of the project area. Setting the boundaries of where to locate the project and search for potential sites is the purpose of defining the delineated area.

The Delineated Area

Establishing the delineated area is a significant action. The future location and character of the project determines the relationship to the local community and cost of the project. More than that, the area selected also holds the potential to support other federal and local planning initiatives.

The delineated area defines the project area in geographic terms. The delineated area should be large enough to provide a number of sites for comparison and evaluation. It may be as small as several blocks in a dense urban area, or as large as an entire central business area in a rural community.

The Site and Design Prospectus may set parameters on the delineated area, so be sure to review the Prospectus to ensure “Prospectus integrity.” Project requirements, technical factors, or financial factors that can be addressed by the general location or that are partially influenced by location should be considered in the definition of the delineated area. Examples of location-specific factors (as distinguished from site-specific factors)

The selection of the delineated area must comply with all government laws and Executive Orders.

The Regional Counsel ensures that all applicable regulations and Executive Orders are followed.

The definition of the delineated area creates the first opportunity to support local planning initiatives.

“Exercise careful judgment in stating selection criteria in the advertisement in order to preserve discretion for GSA to consider other factors. The statement of minimum criteria will serve to assure submission of offers that are at least minimally responsive.”

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are proximity to other federal and public facilities, shops and services, and transportation routes and systems; or inclusion in a particular neighborhood, land use or zoning use district, or redevelopment area. There are a number of Executive Orders that deal with general location, such as first consideration of inclusion in a central business area (E.O. 12072) or historic district (E.O. 13006). In addition, note that E.O. 11988 (“Floodplain Management”) takes precedence over E.O. 12072 and E.O. 13006. When the delineated area is defined to satisfy these factors, it ensures that all potential sites within the delineated area also comply.

The development of the advertisement must follow all federal regulations and guidelines, Executive Orders, and other applicable laws. The advertisement’s language ensures that site owners supply adequate information to the GSA to enable selection of the best site, based on its ability to meet the project requirements, technical factors, and financial factors. The description of the delineated area and the evaluation factors are key items included in the advertisement for sites.

Recommended Activities

1. Review GSA procedures, Executive Orders, and other laws that apply to advertising for sites, including delineated area definition, minimum requirements, and general evaluation factors. “Appendix D” includes a sample advertisement. Use the list of references at the end of this section to identify materials in *GSA Guidebook 1: Acquisition of Real Property*. Be sure to review those federal policies and Executive Orders that impact defining the criteria.
2. Determine whether a delineated area or general project location area was identified in the Feasibility Study or Site and Design Prospectus. Set boundaries for the delineated area.
3. Prepare the advertisement and review it internally before publication.
4. Request that the offeror provide site information that will help the team review offers. For example, the advertisement usually requests an offer letter; an accurate description of the site; evidence of ownership; and a plat of the site. In addition, site topography; location map; title; property surveys (with metes and bounds); utility information; soil information; existing structures and condition; as well as any previous development studies, traffic reports, and surveys, among other items, also could be requested.

5. Determine the advertising period. The optimum situation is to leave the advertisement open for thirty (30) days. However, if the schedule does not permit, or if the advertisement is being used mainly as a validation formality and the preferred site is fairly firm, then the advertisement may run for a shorter period. The time limitation for responding to the advertisement does not preclude the Site Investigation Team from accepting late offers. The team should continue to investigate sites for as long as it is feasible.
6. Place public notices and advertisements for potential sites in a variety of venues, including local publications (preferably, two daily local newspapers; if not, then use a weekly) and the FedBizOpps Web site to ensure the widest possible circulation. Provide copies of the advertisement to the local Property Management Office for display in public areas of the federal building lobby if possible. If it becomes necessary to amend the announcement or advertisement, then it should be revised as early as practicable and through the same process as above.
7. Meet with walk-in offerors at the place and times posted in the public notice and advertisement.
8. Review offers for completeness. Make sure that each offeror's file is complete. Request missing information from offerors in order to complete the files and prepare for the evaluation.

Send copies of public notices, advertisements, and publication schedules to the Commissioner of Public Buildings, the Office of the Chief Architect, and the Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs Office in case they receive inquiries about site selection activities.

Outcomes

- Selection of a delineated area to satisfy project requirements, technical factors, and financial factors
- Completion and publication of the advertisement in accordance with GSA procedures
- Receipt of offers for review

Duration

This task typically takes five (5) weeks. Factors impacting duration:

- Project schedule
- Purpose of soliciting offers for this project
- Number of options for publication
- Local interest in providing sites

References

"Troubleshooting Guide"; "NEPA Activities in Site Selection"; "Appendix B: Major Federal Laws, Executive Orders, Regulations, and GSA Directives"; "Appendix D: Sample Advertisement"

GSA Guidebook 1: Acquisition of Real Property, "Appendix 5: Examples of Site Selection Criteria"; "Appendix 14: Examples of Advertisements for Sites"

Conduct Site Tours and Site Searches

There is no substitute for the actual experience of visiting the delineated area and potential sites. A field visit often reveals important views and visual relationships; information about the neighborhood character and amenities; as well as a better understanding of scale, proximity, and adjacencies.

By touring the local marketplace and viewing the delineated areas and potential sites, additional information may be gained that identifies other potential sites and suggests fine-tuning of the evaluation criteria. The team can identify potential sites to be analyzed and considered without a formal offer from the site owner or agent.

Remember to bring a camcorder or a camera to record your observations and add graphic documentation to the project record.

Recommended Activities

1. Tour delineated area to understand the neighborhood and identify other potential sites and evaluation criteria. Prepare a worksheet to help collect and record information about each site (see Exhibit 3.3: Site Tour Evaluation Worksheet).
2. Include customer agency representatives, a real estate representative, an appraiser, and an architect/engineer from either the GSA Regional Office or the GSA Central Office in the site visits.
3. Visit any sites that could be donated to the government.
4. Visit sites that are part of a redevelopment area.
5. Consider potential site exchange opportunities.
6. Tour sites identified by local groups.
7. Make additional inquiries into the marketplace.

Outcome

Application of local and field knowledge to define the delineated area and the evaluation factors for developing the advertisement

Duration

This task typically takes two (2) weeks.

Reference

GSA Guidebook 1: Acquisition of Real Property, "Appendix 21: Site Investigation—List of Items Needed"

If the delineated area is modified, then the site search should be readvertised.

Exhibit 3.3: Site Tour Evaluation Worksheet

Site Information

Site Name:

Site Size:

Site Address:

Site Location:

Character of the Parcel

Distinguishing Features:

Existing Structures on Site:

Other Existing Development:

Topography:

Physical Features:

Access and Circulation:

Vegetation:

Water Bodies, Wetlands, Floodplain, Surface Drainage:

Immediate Surroundings

Neighborhood Character:

Land Uses:

Shading and Solar Access:

Noise Sources (Street, Rail, Aircraft):

Odors:

Views and Vistas:

Adjacent Land Uses:

Adjacency to Roads and Public Transit:

Former Site Uses, History of Existing Structures:

Historic Preservation, Special Districts, and so forth:

Compile Offers

Compile the information from all of the submitted offers and from any other sites that the team identified for evaluation. Organize the information so that the team will be able to access and review the information easily. This activity establishes the long list of potential sites for evaluation.

Recommended Activities

1. Compile all site data from the various offers and from any other identified sites into a standardized data collection format, such as folders, binders, or a database.
2. Make sure to date stamp and log all offers. Label and record all maps, drawings, and electronic data for future reference.
3. Determine whether there are any common characteristics among the long list of sites that require NEPA, CERCLA, NHPA, or special studies. If this is the case, then it may be possible to start the preliminary data collection and analysis tasks of these studies.

Outcome

- Organization of the long list of offered sites, with backup materials for easy review

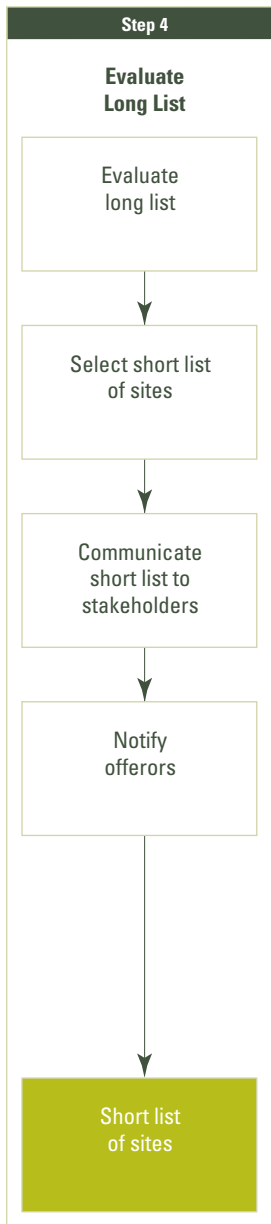
Duration

This task typically takes one (1) week.

Reference

GSA Guidebook 1: Acquisition of Real Property, "Appendix 23: Construction Management Site Data Inventory—GSA Form 1239"

Step 4: Evaluate Long List



Purpose

In this step, the Site Investigation Team—using their knowledge of the project and its requirements, technical factors, and financial factors—reviews and evaluates the long list. Typically, the three (3) most suitable sites that satisfy the evaluation criteria compose the short list for further analysis. Creating the short list is a significant step toward selecting the site.

The team coordinates with representatives of the customer agency and any contractors, such as professional services firms, for NEPA and NHPA studies. The team also should coordinate closely with representatives of local government, the congressional delegation, and stakeholders.

Recommended Activities

Evaluate Long List

The team reviews both offered and unoffered sites for their suitability to support the project requirements, technical factors, and financial factors described in the advertisement and determined by the Site Investigation Team.

Select Short List of Sites

Develop a summary of short-listed sites for review.

Communicate Short List to Stakeholders

The team reviews the short list with the GSA Regional Office team, customer agency, local government, and stakeholders, as appropriate, on a confidential basis.

Notify Offerors

Offerors are notified if their sites have been accepted for the short list and further study. Offerors whose sites did not meet the minimal (“Go/No Go”) criteria also are notified, and their offers are returned.

Duration

This step typically takes three (3) weeks. Factors impacting duration:

- Number of submissions
- Complexity of the submitted sites
- Involvement of local stakeholders

Evaluate Long List

At this time, the team meets to review and evaluate all of the potential sites assembled as the long list. Allow sufficient time for the team to review, discuss, compare, and evaluate all of the sites. Focus on their potential as well as their constraints for the project.

Recommended Activities

1. Schedule the meeting for the team to review and evaluate all of the sites. Make sure that each team member receives all materials to review prior to the meeting.
2. Review the minimum requirements and the general evaluation factors published in the advertisement. In addition, the Site Investigation Team has the discretion to consider any other factors and to evaluate the criteria at any degree of detail that is appropriate. Use Exhibit 4.1: Criteria Categories for Evaluation of the Long-Listed Sites to help determine whether there are additional criteria for the team to use for evaluation.
3. Agree on a methodology to manage the evaluation activities. Site Investigation Teams can choose any methodology, as long as it allows a careful consideration of the evaluation factors. Prepare a worksheet to track the investigation and complete an analysis of each site.
4. Review each site and then compare the sites overall. Identify the three (3) most suitable for the project.

In addition to taking photographs, it is helpful to videotape the sites and the surrounding areas. The video is useful to the team during analysis of sites and provides a great briefing tool for the Regional Administrator, Assistant Regional Administrator, and Business Line Managers.

Always solicit and consider donated sites, but carefully study the site before accepting a donation.

Don't accept a donated site just because it is free. There are always considerations, tradeoffs, and costs associated with every site.

Exhibit 4.1: Criteria Categories for Evaluation of the Long-Listed Sites

Project Requirements

Required Site Area	Verify minimum site area
	Assess expansion capabilities or excessive assemblage potential
Location Preferences	Verify location preferences (other agencies, services, etc.)
	Assess remoteness/accessibility
	Determine convenience to public
Site Coverage	Check preliminary/macro-level site coverage (building, parking, circulation, and open space)
	Assess construction staging (materials, equipment)
Security Requirements	Verify setback compliance
	Review site access
Sustainability	Identify potential LEED credits for sustainable site goals
	• Reuse buildings/storm water management
	• Rehabilitate damaged sites/brownfield development
	• Provide or improve habitat
	• Preserve natural resources
	• Reduce pollution from automobiles/alternative transport availability
• Increase energy efficiency/reduce energy usage	
Neighborhood Character/ Immediate Surroundings	Review neighborhood character
	• Surroundings
	• Economic conditions
	• Demographics
Traffic and Transportation	Screen site and neighborhood for
	• Public transit
	• Bike paths
	• Public parking areas
	• Overall road/traffic capacity

Exhibit 4.1: Criteria Categories for Evaluation of the Long-Listed Sites (cont.)

Project Requirements (cont.)

Image and Visibility	Examine visibility of site and development Study proximity/visibility from major roads
Local Planning Requirements/ Initiatives	Check consistency with comprehensive land use plan and support of local planning initiatives
Budget	Identify factors that indicate whether site acquisition or development costs may exceed allocated funds
Schedule	Coordinate site availability with project schedule

Technical Factors

Site Context/Location Information	<p>Check context and location</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review property description • Examine aerial photo(s) • Analyze survey/plat <p>Determine site development impact on its surroundings</p>
Physical Elements	<p>Screen for hydrology (watersheds, wetlands, floodplains, surface drainage), including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100-year or 500-year floodplains, floodway • Wetlands • High water table • Drainage problems • Stream valley buffers <p>Review topography</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perform steep slopes analysis • Identify portions of the site that are unusable <p>Study physical features</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess factors that may impact development <p>Map coastal zone and development implications</p> <p>Catalog existing improvements and buildings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate potential demolition or extensive site clearing costs • Assess need for asbestos abatement

Review landscape/vegetation

- Identify landscape with amenity value or clearing requirements

Study archaeological features

- Survey known archaeological resources

Evaluate environmental hazards

- Assess known environmental hazards
- Identify potential for lengthy environmental studies

Identify threatened, rare, and endangered species

- Evaluate potential existence of threatened, rare, and endangered species

Assess sustainability

- Identify potential for support of sustainability goals in project requirements

Review conservation program and regulations

- Assess potential conservation requirements and opportunities

Zoning and Local Codes

(This category may have a greater impact for Lease Construct projects.)

Review compliance with macro-level code/zoning requirements

Determine setbacks

Check maximum building heights

Verify maximum lot coverage

Review proposed changes in zoning process that will affect this location

Identify issues that will require a longer review and approval time frame

Assess potential of project acceptance

Exhibit 4.1: Criteria Categories for Evaluation of the Long-Listed Sites (cont.)

Technical Factors (cont.)

Public Streets and Alleys	Check compliance with public works codes for streets, roadways
Subsurface/Geotechnical Conditions	Review geotechnical, subsurface, and soil conditions that impact development of this site
Seismic Conditions/Requirements	Check for seismic risks
Energy Conservation/Utilities	Determine energy conservation potential Assess utility capacity for program requirements and anticipated uses
Sewer	Review sanitary sewer capacity and planned expansion Assess storm sewer capacity and planned expansion Identify existing utility easements
Historic Preservation/ Cultural Resources	Check presence of existing historic districts/areas/buildings Determine eligibility for listing on the National Register of Historic Places Verify historic landscapes Research cultural resources Assess impact on historic or cultural planning groups and programs
Existing Use, Ownership, and Control	Identify ownership status/type/complexity Check compatibility of current uses with proposed use(s) Review compatibility of adjacent uses with proposed use(s)
Community Services	Define proximity to community services Determine proximity to schools and parks, public safety, and so forth

Financial Factors

Site Acquisition and Relocation Costs	Check impact on site acquisition budget
Demolition/Remediation Costs	Assess impact on site demolition/remediation budget
Site Construction and Preparation Costs	Review impact on site construction and preparation budget Identify offeror-funded improvements
Infrastructure Improvements	List required contributions to local infrastructure
Local Economic Development Impact	Review potential to achieve local economic development impact with site
Funding Sources Through Partnering	Locate potential funding sources through partnering (e.g., economic development, remediation)
GSA Financial Performance	Support GSA financial performance goals

Outcomes

- Evaluation of all sites
- Identification of the short-listed sites

Duration

This task typically takes one (1) week.

References

"NEPA Activities in Site Selection"; "Appendix B: Major Federal Laws, Executive Orders, Regulations, and GSA Directives"

GSA Guidebook 1: Acquisition of Real Property, "Appendix 18: Specifications for GSA Site Investigation Report—GSA Form 1433"; "Appendix 21: Site Investigation—List of Items Needed" (for city or county sites as applicable); "Appendix 22: Tabulation of Undesirable Characteristics"; "Appendix 24: Fact Sheet—Environmental Site Assessments (ESAs)"; "Appendix 25: Environmental Site Assessment Criteria"; "Appendix 26: Cultural Resource Assessment (Phase I) Requirements"; "Appendix 27: Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Requirements"; "Appendix 28: Environmental Assessment (EA) Requirements"

U.S. General Services Administration, Public Buildings Service, October 1999, *National Environmental Policy Act: NEPA Desk Guide*; U.S. General Services Administration, *CATEX Checklist*; U.S. General Services Administration, Public Buildings Service, Historic Buildings Program, *A Guide to Cultural Resource and Historic Preservation Information*, www.gsa.gov/Portal/content/products_content.jsp?contentOID=115580&contentType=1007; *Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, U.S. Courts Design Guide*, "Chapter 4" and "Chapter 5", hydra.gsa.gov/pbs/pc/tc_files/stds/courts.pdf; U.S. General Services Administration, Public Buildings Service, *U.S. Port of Entry Guidelines*; U.S. Department of Justice, United States Marshals Service, Judicial Security Division, May 2000 (rev.), *USMS Pub. No. 64*.

Select Short List of Sites

Following the site evaluation meeting, complete several follow-up tasks before evaluating the short-listed sites. These include an evaluation summary of the long list, a plan for further review and evaluation, and additional contractor involvement.

Recommended Activities

1. Confirm the short list of the top three (3) selected sites for further study.
2. Draft the summary of findings and justification for sites that did not advance to the short list (see *GSA Guidebook 1: Acquisition of Real Property*, "Appendix 22"). Note topics for further investigation during the short-list analysis, such as need for an ESA; the scoping analysis for CATEX/EA/EIS; or special studies, such as required by NHPA, Section 106.
3. Identify and plan follow-up actions with others at GSA, the customer agency, the congressional delegation, and other stakeholders. Keep in mind that these contacts may be potential sources for additional data collection in Step 5.
4. Give contractors advance notice of when short-listed sites will be ready for evaluation.

Be sure to include the following items in your budgets:

- Costs for relocating tenants, utilities, and roadways;
- Site maintenance and security (to secure the site after ownership is transferred to the GSA);
- Asbestos abatement;
- Site remediation;
- Demolition; and
- Historic preservation.

Outcomes

- Documentation of short-listed sites and undesirable sites
- Preparation of draft summary
- Identification of follow-up tasks with contractors, customer agency, and stakeholders

Duration

This task typically takes one (1) week.

References

“Troubleshooting Guide”; “NEPA Activities in Site Selection”

GSA Guidebook 1: Acquisition of Real Property, “Appendix 20: Utilities List Form”; “Appendix 22: Tabulation of Undesirable Characteristics”; “Appendix 23: Construction Management Site Data Inventory—GSA Form 1239”; “Appendix 24: Fact Sheet—Environmental Site Assessments (ESAs)”; “Appendix 25: Environmental Site Assessment Criteria”; “Appendix 26: Cultural Resource Assessment (Phase I) Requirements”; “Appendix 27: Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Requirements”; “Appendix 28: Environmental Assessment (EA) Requirements”

Communicate Short List to Stakeholders

Communicate the status of the proposed short list to customer agency representatives and other stakeholders on a confidential basis to update them on the process and solicit further input about each of the potential sites.

Recommended Activities

1. Plan meetings with customer agency representatives and local authorities to discuss the short list of sites. Seek input on issues to be explored in evaluating the short list, as well as linkages between the potential sites and local plans and initiatives. Describe upcoming activities and the schedule to complete the selection. Consider the need for future press releases or other communications with the public and customer agency employees.
2. Continue communications with local businesses and community groups as appropriate.

Outcomes

- Customer agency’s, local authorities’, and stakeholders’ input for short-list analysis
- Continuation of effective communications between GSA and stakeholders

Duration

This task typically takes one (1) week. Factors impacting duration:

- Number of meetings necessary
- Degree of local interest in or opposition to the project or certain sites

Notify Offerors

To complete the activities associated with identifying the short-listed sites, notify offerors of the status of their submittals.

Recommended Activities

1. Develop letters to notify all offerors of the status of their submittals.
2. Create letter templates for noncompliant sites and for short-listed sites.
3. Describe next steps to offerors whose sites have been short-listed.
4. Return materials to offerors whose sites were not short-listed.

Outcome

- Notification of status/decision to offerors

Duration

This task typically takes one (1) week.

Reference

GSA Guidebook 1: Acquisition of Real Property, "Appendix 17: Contract to Sell Real Property—GSA Form 1226"

Step 5: Evaluate Short List/Recommend Site(s)

Purpose

The purpose of this step is to evaluate the short-listed sites and to recommend a final site selection. This step of the site selection process historically has been the most difficult. The inherent pressures and conflicts all come into focus with the completion of the final detailed analysis and evaluation. The team may avoid many of these complications by following a structured and thorough process.

Additionally, the completion of NEPA (CATEX, EA, EIS), ESA (Phases I, II, III), and NHPA (Section 106) reports, as well as special studies, occurs during this step. It is not uncommon for these activities to take six (6) months to twelve (12) months to complete, and they may lead to elimination or change in preference of the short-listed sites.

Recommended Activities

Conduct Detailed Site Evaluation

This is the final evaluation of the short-listed sites. This activity focuses on completion of the required environmental reports and other studies necessary to finish the final Site Investigation Report.

Communicate/Review Recommendations

The Team Leader communicates the status of the proposed preferred site(s) to customer agency representatives and other stakeholders to solicit their final input about the preferred site(s).

Prepare Final Site Investigation Report

To complete the site selection activities, the team prepares the final Site Investigation Report, according to the format specified in GSA Form 1433.

Recommend Preferred Site(s)

The final action closing the site selection process is the Regional Administrator's signature on the Site Investigation Report.



GSA exercises due diligence by conducting a Phase I ESA prior to purchasing a property to ensure that all environmental conditions have been identified.

Materials containing radon, asbestos, lead paints, and lead-contaminated drinking water are not within the scope of the Phase I ESA, but these factors could be addressed by the same contractor.

In no event should a site selection be made prior to substantial completion of the NEPA process.

Duration

This task typically takes twenty-five (25) weeks. Factors impacting duration:

- Preparation of NEPA, ESA, and special studies
- Coordination of various studies within the project
- Communications with and buy-in from stakeholders, local authorities, and community groups

Conduct Detailed Site Evaluation

Detailed site studies are necessary for the final evaluation of the short-listed sites. The focus of this activity must be to complete the assessment of the project requirements and the technical and financial factors, including the site plan test fits, environmental studies, and appraisal reports, plus the development of other information to round out the final Site Investigation Report.

Recommended Activities

1. Review Exhibit 5.1: Criteria Categories for Evaluation of the Short-Listed Sites to identify the criteria needed to review the short list. The evaluation should address all three areas: project requirements, technical factors, and financial factors.
2. Review GSA Form 1239: Construction Management Site Data Inventory and GSA Form 1433: Specifications for GSA Site Investigation Report.
3. Meet with the Regional Environmental Quality Advisor to scope the required level of NEPA analysis (CATEX, EA, or EIS). Determine the need for any public meetings. GSA regulations require that the scoping process shall be in accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ); consequently, thirty (30) days may be required to organize and attend a public meeting.

Before a final site selection can be made, the NEPA contractor must be notified of the top three (3) sites, as well as the preferred site. The NEPA analysis of the three (3) sites is used in the decision-making process for the final site selection. Regions and teams must avoid making site selection decisions before the NEPA process is complete.

Project Managers must understand that mitigation measures outlined in the final EIS are binding and can have significant impacts on design and construction. Mitigation measures may be required for such aspects as height and massing controls, material limitations, building egress limitations, controls on construction activities, and so forth. Such measures could have significant functional and cost impacts. Consequently, these added costs could sway a site selection. (See “NEPA Activities in Site Selection” for more background on NEPA, ESA, and NHPA studies and analysis.)

4. Determine whether any ESA studies are appropriate, and if so, decide how many phases may be required for each site. Discuss the need for special studies.
5. Meet with the Regional Historic Preservation Officer to discuss whether a Section 106 study should be conducted. Any other special studies should commence at this time.
6. Begin preappraisal actions. A preliminary estimate of value or a fee appraisal can be prepared at this point.
7. Hold a team meeting to coordinate GSA staff and contractors who are performing the necessary studies. Use the meeting as an opportunity to review schedules, coordination, Communications Plan, and interactions with local authorities and stakeholders.
8. Monitor team activities to keep work on schedule and be available to address issues and problems that may emerge. Keep internal stakeholders up to date on the team’s progress and any outstanding issues.
9. Keep in contact with customer agency representatives and other stakeholders throughout the process.
10. Plan a team meeting to review and evaluate all of the short-listed sites after all of the draft study reports are completed. Make sure that each team member receives all materials in adequate time to review them before the meeting. Review the methodology used for the evaluation activities in Step 4 and refine the methodology if needed. Prepare a worksheet to track the complete analysis of each site.
11. Review each site and then compare the sites overall, documenting the advantages and disadvantages of each. Identify the most suitable sites for the project and rank the short-listed sites.
12. Prepare a draft Site Investigation Report.

Tips on Completing a Site Investigation Report

- Use a summary format with supporting exhibits,
- Tab all referenced exhibits, and
- Use panoramic photos for best results.

Exhibit 5.1: Criteria Categories for Evaluation of the Short-Listed Sites

Project Requirements

Required Site Area	Test site area, configuration, geometry, functionality, and expansion capabilities
Location Preferences	Rank site location characteristics
Site Coverage	<p>Study site coverage (building, parking, circulation, and open space)</p> <p>Determine building massing and number of levels</p> <p>Assess requirements for cut/fill</p> <p>Plan construction staging</p>
Security Requirements	<p>Determine setback compliance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10-year building • 30-year building <p>Plan perimeter control</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vehicular access • Service access • Building entry and access
Sustainability	<p>Evaluate sustainable design and LEED opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location and site potential • Renewable energy systems • Smart growth strategies
Neighborhood Character/ Immediate Surroundings	<p>Assess neighborhood character</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crime statistics • Economic conditions • Demographics • Existence of noise or odor <p>Evaluate physical project impacts on adjacent uses, wind, shading, and views</p>
Traffic and Transportation	<p>Evaluate traffic and transportation opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proximity of public transit • Number of public transit stops/lines • Proximity to public parking <p>Evaluate adequacy of roadway and intersection capacity</p>

Image and Visibility

Identify view shed/view corridors

Determine vistas

Assess visibility

**Local Planning Requirements/
Initiatives**

Check consistency with comprehensive land use plan and support of local planning initiatives

Budget

Identify site impacts on project budget (additional studies, tunnels, demolition of existing structures, etc.)

Schedule

Perform detailed investigation of site schedule (negotiation, acquisition, preparation/remediation, etc.)

Technical Factors

Site Context/Location Information

Evaluate impact on adjoining sites and neighborhood(s)

Analyze external conditions that may limit development

- EMI interference, FAA height limitations

Physical Elements

Review site impacts of hydrology

- Floodplains
- Surface drainage issues and percolation rate(s)
- Wetlands and mitigation potential
- Stream valley buffers

Evaluate need for additional studies, approval procedures (city, county, state, USDOE, USACOE, FEMA, others), time frames, and costs

Examine topography

- Identify existing topographic features that will limit development of this site

Review physical features

- Analyze other factors that may impact development of this site

Identify coastal zone requirements

Exhibit 5.1: Criteria Categories for Evaluation of the Short-Listed Sites (cont.)

Technical Factors (cont.)

Survey existing improvements and buildings

- Study existing improvements, buildings, features (overhead wires, utility poles/guy wires) that will conflict or support the development of this site

Assess landscape/vegetation

- Survey existing vegetation (large trees, stands of trees) that will conflict with or enhance the development of the site

Analyze archaeological features

- Research archaeological resources

Identify environmental conditions

- Conduct an additional study to define/mitigate environmental hazards
- Determine how the project impacts threatened, rare, and endangered species

Evaluate sustainability

- Identify any physical elements that support sustainability goals

Review conservation program and regulations

- Evaluate impact of conservation requirements

Zoning and Local Codes

(This category may have a greater impact for Lease Construct projects.)

Report zoning compliance of the site and investigate any issues that require review and approval

Review compliance with macro-level code/zoning requirements

Check setbacks

Determine maximum building heights

Establish maximum lot coverage

Define proposed changes in zoning process that will affect this location

Determine issues that will require a longer review and approval time frame

Assess potential of project acceptance

Public Streets and Alleys	Check public works codes for proposed streets and roadways
Subsurface/Geotechnical Conditions	Study geotechnical, subsurface, and soil conditions that impact development of this site
Seismic Conditions/Requirements	Evaluate seismic risks
Energy Conservation/Utilities	Evaluate energy conservation potential
	Study capacity of current or proposed utilities to support the project
	Describe any required utility easements
Sewer	Review sanitary sewer service capacity, potential restrictions on use, and planned expansion
	Identify requirements for on-site storm water design
Historic Preservation/Site History	Document site's cultural and historic resources, including historic landscapes
	Determine whether existing structures are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places
	Assess development impact on historic groups and programs
	Identify historic preservation parameters and restrictions for development of the site
Existing Use, Ownership, and Control	Evaluate site(s) for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ownership status/type and control • Compatibility of current uses with proposed use(s) • Compatibility of adjacent uses with proposed use(s)
Community Services	Determine adequacy of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public safety • Fire protection • Other required services <p>Assess proximity to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools • Parks • Other services

Financial Factors

Site Acquisition and Relocation Costs	Develop detailed costs for site acquisition and relocation of tenants
Demolition/Remediation Costs	Establish detailed costs for site demolition/remediation/relocation
Site Construction and Preparation Costs	Estimate detailed site costs for site preparation and improvements such as relocating utilities from streets and alleys
Infrastructure Improvements	List required contributions/costs to local infrastructure
Local Economic Development Impact	Assess measurable positive local economic development impact
Funding Sources Through Partnering	Identify potential funding partnerships
GSA Financial Performance	Predict satisfaction of GSA's Regional performance measurements, targets, and strategic goals

Duration

This task typically takes seventeen (17) weeks.

References

“NEPA Activities in Site Selection”; “Appendix B: Major Federal Laws, Executive Orders, Regulations, and GSA Directives”

GSA Guidebook 1: Acquisition of Real Property, “Appendix 1: Fact Sheet on Summaries of NEPA, Associated Laws, and Executive Orders”; “Appendix 2: Fact Sheet—Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA)”; “Appendix 8: P-100—Facilities Standards and Site Planning Criteria” (excerpts); “Appendix 9: U.S. Courts Design Guide” (excerpts); “Appendix 20: Utilities List Form”; “Appendix 24: Fact Sheet—Environmental Site Assessments (ESAs)”; “Appendix 25: Environmental Site Assessment Criteria”; “Appendix 26: Cultural Resource Assessment (Phase I) Requirements”; “Appendix 27: Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Requirements”; “Appendix 28: Environmental Assessment (EA) Requirements”

GSA U.S. General Services Administration, Public Buildings Service, October 1999, *National Environmental Policy Act: NEPA Desk Guide*; National Historic Preservation Act 1966, www.gsa.gov/attachments/GSA_POLICIES/pol/nhpa.pdf; Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, *U.S. Courts Design Guide*, hydra.gsa.gov/pbs/pc/tc_files/stds/courts.pdf; U.S. General Services Administration, Public Buildings Service, *U.S. Port of Entry Guidelines*; U.S. Department of Justice, United States Marshals Service, Judicial Security Division, May 2000 (rev.), *USMS Pub. No. 64*

Communicate/Review Recommendations

After the team reaches a consensus to recommend the selected site(s), the team communicates the status of the proposed recommendation to the customer agency representatives and other stakeholders to solicit any final input about the preferred site(s).

Recommended Activities

1. Prepare materials and schedule meetings to discuss short-listed sites with project stakeholders:
 - GSA ARA.
 - Customer agency representatives.
 - Local authorities and agencies.
 - GSA Central Office.

Seek input on issues to be addressed when announcing the preferred site(s), including linkages between the potential site(s) and local plans and initiatives. Describe the remaining schedule and activities required to complete the acquisition.

Project information at this stage is very confidential.

Carefully manage the number of stakeholders who have access to confidential information.

2. Consider the need for press releases or other communications with the public, Congressional Representatives, and customer agency employees.
3. Plan meetings or continue ongoing communications with local businesses and community groups as appropriate.

Outcomes

- Awareness by customer agency and local authorities of preferred site(s) and further activities in the acquisition process
- Consensus approval of recommendation
- Effective communications between GSA and stakeholders

Duration

This task typically takes one (1) week.

Prepare Final Site Investigation Report

To complete the site selection activities, prepare the final Site Investigation Report according to the format specified in GSA Form 1433.

Recommended Activities

1. Assemble all supporting documents for the Site Investigation Report from team members and contractors. (See Exhibit 5..2: Typical Supporting Exhibits) Review all documents to ensure that they are complete and correct.
2. Draft the final Site Investigation Report per GSA Form 1433.

Outcomes

- Final Site Investigation Report
- Documentation on preferred site(s)

Duration

This task typically takes four (4) weeks. Factors impacting duration:

- Coordination of and completion time for supporting documents and reports

References

GSA Guidebook 1: Acquisition of Real Property, "Appendix 18: Specifications for GSA Site Investigation Report—GSA Form 1433"; "Appendix 23: Construction Management Site Data Inventory—GSA Form 1239"

Recommend Preferred Site(s)

The final action that closes the site selection process is the Regional Administrator's signature on the Site Investigation Report. Once this document is signed, then site acquisition activities may proceed.

Recommended Activities

1. Present final Site Investigation Report to RA for signature.
2. Notify PBS Commissioner of site selection recommendation, after the RA signs the Site Investigation Report.
3. Announce formal site selection, complete fee appraisal, and then begin negotiations for the actual purchase of the property. Negotiations for acquisition begin with the preferred site, after the RA concurs with the site recommendation. If this is not successful, then the next site is considered. The short-listed sites already have been compared financially through the use of preliminary estimates of value and/or asking prices and purchase options. It is important to have a firm site decision before officially beginning negotiations since relocation benefits are triggered by the "initiation of negotiations." Owner/occupants and tenants who move off the site during site selection activities may have a basis for relocation claims if the government has entered into negotiations.
4. Develop a short synopsis of the site selection, for example, size of property, location, type of building to be constructed, the customer agency, and proposed construction date. Transmit this information to the Office of Intergovernmental and Congressional Affairs, with a copy to the PBS Commissioner. The Office of Intergovernmental and Congressional Affairs is responsible for notifying the congressional delegation and coordinating public release of the site announcement.

Outcomes

- Completion of site investigation
- Initiation of appraisal activities

Duration

This task typically takes one (1) week.

Exhibit 5.2: Typical Supporting Exhibits

1. Site Directives

2. Site Selection Criteria

3. Public Notice

4. GSA Form 1239: Construction Management Site Data Inventory

5. Photos of Recommended Site(s)

6. Site Plans of Recommended Site(s)

7. Boundary Survey/ Zoning Report

8. Soil Testing Information/Phase I Environmental Audits

9. Seismic Map

10. Water, Storm Sewer, and Sanitary Sewer Maps

11. Flood Zone Map

12. Real Estate Value Analysis

13. CATEX/EA/EIS Reports

14. Cultural Resource Summary Overview

15. Preliminary Site Assessment

Troubleshooting Guide

Troubleshooting Guide

There are five topics of interest addressed in this section: understanding the site selection process, working with the public, managing expectations, working with GSA, and managing the acquisition. GSA staff with experience in site selection and acquisition developed answers to some of the most common questions and concerns about finding, selecting, and acquiring the right site. The following are among the contributors:

- Rob Andrukonis, AIA, Director, Center for Courthouse Programs, Office of the Chief Architect
- Vinita Canright, Special Assistant, Center for Construction and Project Management, Office of the Chief Architect, Heartland Region
- Gary Roberts, Realty Specialist, Public Buildings Service
- Harmon Eggers, Deputy Associate General Counsel, Real Property Division
- Frank Giblin, Director, Urban Development Program, Office of the Chief Architect
- Bill Jenkins, National Realty Services Officer, Public Buildings Service
- Jan Kuykendall, Director, Site Acquisition Staff/Site Knowledge Bank, Greater Southwest Region
- Sharon Roach, Regional Counsel, National Capital Region
- Mike Roper, Director of Development, Public Buildings Service, Southeast Sun Belt Region
- Bayard T. Whitmore, Center for Historic Buildings, Office of the Chief Architect

Understanding the Site Selection Process

When does site selection start?

Site selection officially begins once the Site Directive is received from the GSA Central Office, following submission of the President's Budget (which includes the and Site and Design Prospectus) to Congress. However, preliminary site investigation activities are permitted and encouraged prior to receiving the Site Directive. Funding for preliminary site investigations typically comes from Regional planning budgets.

How much of the site selection process actually can be performed before the site funding is approved?

As long as all major federal stakeholders (GSA decision-makers, customers, etc.) agree that it is appropriate to proceed with site selection activities before funding is approved, most activities leading to site selection can be conducted, pending the availability of funds. It is also important to conduct such preliminary actions when a property is offered for donation or a property exchange is being proposed.

How can we get funding for the site selection process before the Site and Design Prospectus has been approved?

Funding for preliminary site selection work (before site and design funds are released) comes through the Regional Budget Activity 61 fund. It is recommended that Regions budget for these expenses to ensure that funds are available. Sometimes, it also can come out of the customer agency budget in the form of an RWA.

I thought that the site was selected in the Feasibility Study. Why are we doing it over?

Possible sites are reviewed during the Feasibility Study to develop a realistic budget for the Prospectus. While a preferred site may be identified in the Feasibility Study, GSA has neither a formal, approved project nor congressional authority at this point. Selection of a site during the feasibility phase is predecisional because insufficient data have been gathered, and all potential sites have not yet been identified or evaluated. Upon receipt of the Site Directive and initiation of the formal site investigation, the site selection process begins a more detailed level of analysis and investigation of all potential sites.

Will every site selection follow the step-by-step process in this Guide?

The site selection process can be streamlined or more comprehensive, depending on the project. These recommendations are not mandatory. This Guide has been developed to provide assistance on important issues of site selection.

What are some of the “red flags” of the site selection process, indicating that a project may require more time or be more complex?

These types of conditions are likely to extend your process:

- Community opposition or opposition from owners/tenants
- Multiple owners
- Site that is oddly configured or too small
- Potential archaeological issues
- Discovery of unidentified historic structures, floodplain, underground utilities, and environmental contamination
- Need for site remediation of any environmental contamination during previous use of the property
- Detailed studies to support NEPA, NHPA, CERCLA, or other special studies
- Insufficient public parking or access to transit

Working With the Public

Won't public involvement in the process make my job harder by bringing out more opponents and contentious parties?

No, not in the long run. Avoiding public involvement can cause significant delays. One of the biggest threats to a project is strong opposition that arises at the 11th hour, with delays measured in years rather than weeks. Opposition often is based on legitimate concerns that were not understood, identified early, nor sufficiently addressed. For this reason, make sure that you have covered all of the bases of special interests before selecting the short list. Don't rely solely on city officials for project support; they may not share the interests of the person or group that stops your project.

Try to understand the “opportunity costs” as a community would see them. Be well versed in the benefits that the project can bring to the area—from architectural quality, the numbers of employees and visitors, and their potential spending, to the value of the public space at the federal building. (The Office of the Chief Architect and your Urban Development Advisor can help assemble this information.) Maintaining open communications is the best way to understand how a community is assessing your project.

Two things to keep in mind:

1. Early opposition is better than late opposition.
2. Partnering to meet mutual interests is always better than working in opposition.

When can the process be made public without raising the concern of our authorizing stakeholders (OMB, Congress) and without driving up the site costs?

The premature release of project-specific site information can create speculative land purchases and inflated land value. However, it's difficult to validate the claim that discreet discussions with public officials and design professionals early in the project will change the market's knowledge enough to significantly affect site costs.

Discussions with public officials may be done at a relatively low profile, but once brokers or other players in the local market are brought in, it is hard to keep a lid on it. Care must be taken in these early discussions to fully investigate all alternatives and to avoid making commitments or giving the impression that a site has been preselected.

By the time the Site and Design Prospectus has been submitted to Congress, open public discussions can occur. Two reminders: (1) Both the schedule and the funding available for site acquisition will be in public documents (the Site and Design Prospectus) before authorization is granted to acquire a site. (2) Make sure that the congressional and administration leadership are a part of the “announcement of the project,” as appropriate.

What is GSA's responsibility to existing tenants when a municipality assembles a site for GSA?

If a municipality assembles a site for a GSA project, then GSA must ensure that both the site acquisition and the relocation of site occupants are accomplished in accordance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4601–4655 and the implementing regulations in 49 CFR, Part 24. These are statutory requirements that must be followed when federal funds are used in any part of the project (not just site acquisition).

Managing Expectations

How do I avert expectations that a certain building or location will be selected or already was selected?

The most effective way to manage expectations of the Region, team, customer agency, and community is through education about the site selection and acquisition process. This should occur during the early stages of preliminary planning and feasibility, before

Developing an effective Work Plan and a good Communications Plan is the best way to ensure that the project stays on the right track.

expectations are set. The customer must understand the Capital Program Delivery Process (see Exhibit 1.1). The Feasibility Study is only the beginning of the process. Site selection follows a few years later, and the final decision is made only after funds are authorized.

Stakeholders don't need all of the details, but they need to understand that site selection is based on specific criteria. Some of these are congressionally imposed, and some are developed in concert with the customer to meet operational needs. They must understand who makes the site selection decision and the myriad required activities before reaching that point. The customer agency must know whether there are any outstanding issues, how the issues are addressed, and what effect they have on the final decision.

The community must understand that the process is complex and that their voice is heard. However, the final decision is based on which site is the most advantageous to the federal government and the taxpayer.

The site selection process attracts the interest of many different groups. How do I control the flow of information?

Be proactive through a well-planned press release before gossip and misinformation spread. If early and appropriate information is provided about the site selection process, then the expectations and assumptions about preselection of sites can be minimized.

Make sure that the entire team and local representatives understand that the site information is confidential. Determine whether the Team Leader or the Project Manager will be the point of control. GSA, as the building owner, provides the point person on site selection discussions. A good Communications Plan addresses the sharing of critical site information in a timely and prudent manner. Until the information is made public, the release of site investigation information should be controlled and limited to only those persons having a "need to know."

How do I manage some of the more subjective evaluation criteria, such as site prominence, suitability of environs, or neighborhood character?

The team must develop the priorities and criteria to address these issues. In the site evaluation, the team must reach a consensus on the evaluation criteria based on all of the information regarding the customer's operational and security needs, the type of facility to be constructed, costs, local community concerns, and the comprehensive plan for the city's redevelopment/revitalization.

The following language, which provides the government with the opportunity to select the best site, considering all factors (including subjective factors), is to be included in the advertisement:

“The Government will select the site considered to be most advantageous to the United States, all factors considered. In order to ensure that the selected site is most advantageous to the United States, the Government also will consider any unique attributes or other nuances of a site deemed worthy of consideration, even if not listed in the advertisement.

“None of the above listed evaluation criteria are considered to be more important than any other. However, as sites are evaluated, each site’s unique attributes may result in one or more criteria becoming more important as to that particular site.”

What if the customer agency or community is pushing a site that is not the best one?

Prepare to discuss the pros and cons of each of the alternative sites, based on factual findings. This helps to identify and build consensus for the site that is most advantageous to the government.

Often, the best way to validate your decision is to advertise for alternative sites. This approach ensures that the site decision is based on the best information available. Just as looking at comparable sales helps to assess the value of the property in the appraisal process, investigating comparable site alternatives helps to evaluate the sites in terms of the project requirements, as well as the technical and financial factors. Advertising is also an opportunity to solicit donated sites and emphasize our consideration for use of historic buildings in accordance with E.O. 13006.

If the site issue presented by the customer agency is not resolved, then the Team Leader typically presents the issue to the Director and/or ARA for consideration. The Team Leader summarizes the outstanding points and recommends alternatives. At this point, the Office of the Chief Architect also may be contacted to solicit additional assistance in resolving the matter with the customer.

Working With GSA

Where do I find a Site Specialist?

Regional associates who have real property acquisition, relocation, and site selection experience can be identified by the Site Knowledge Bank. You also may contact the Site Knowledge Bank at 817-978-4662 for project advice, consultation services, and training.

What training currently is available related to site selection and acquisition?

The Site Knowledge Bank is responsible for providing real property acquisition, relocation, and related training, along with national advisory and consultation services. The Site Knowledge Bank schedules and offers training each year to the Regional associates, based on their level of experience, training, and special needs. Class offerings vary each year, depending upon class size, availability, and the specific needs and requests of management and Regional associates.

The Contracting Officer Warrant Program (COWP) also offers training. There are specified training curriculums and education requirements for each warrant and level (such as Basic, Simplified Acquisition, Realty Leasing, Real Property Disposal, and Personal Property Disposal). However, there is no training for Site Acquisition under the COWP.

What is the role of the GSA Central Office in site selection?

The GSA Central Office, including the Office of the Chief Architect, the National Office of Realty Services, and the Portfolio Management Office, provide support to the Regions during all stages of the project delivery process. Those offices are the liaisons to OMB and Congress and offer expertise in most areas of development and design. The Program Coordinator from the Office of the Chief Architect provides multiple levels of support throughout the life of the project.

The Office of the Chief Architect offers expertise in Architecture, Engineering, Urban Development, Construction and Project Management, Historic Buildings, and Courthouse Programs.

What are the differences between Federal Construct and Lease Construct in site selection?

While many requirements and processes are common to both, there are a few differences.

- First, with Federal Construct, the land is purchased outright. With Lease Construct, the government does not take fee title to the land, but assigns the option to the developer.
- Second, with Federal Construct, the team must evaluate the overall cost of the site plus relocation and all other site costs to ensure Prospectus integrity. With Lease Construct, the team must evaluate the cost of the land in addition to the anticipated rental rate to ensure integrity with the net rent, authorized in the Prospectus.

- Third, with Federal Construct, every effort is made to meet local regulations and codes, but it is not a requirement. With Lease Construct, the developer is required to meet all regulations and codes (or seek variances and waivers).
- Fourth, with Federal Construct, the government has the right of eminent domain. With Lease Construct, the practical difficulties associated with the execution of this authority would likely preclude its use.

Where do you find scopes of work for appraisals, title, metes and bounds surveys, and relocations?

Scopes of work for appraisals, appraisal reviews, title, land surveys (boundary/topography/utilities), acquisitions, and relocations are included on the Realty Services Web site under Realty Library>Site Acquisition (inside.pbs.gsa.gov/pe).

The scopes of work for all of the environmental documents (EA; EIS; ESA Phases I, II, III; Cultural Resource study) are included in *GSA Guidebook 1: Acquisition of Real Property*. GSA Guidebooks, including this one, will be made available online (check the GSA Web site for availability).

GSA usually contracts for this work. The appraisal and title must meet Department of Justice Standards for federal land acquisitions.

How do we obtain an exemption from the Interagency Security Committee (ISC) recommendation for a 50-foot standoff distance from a potential explosion?

The ARA (or designee) should send a memorandum requesting the exemption to the Commissioner of PBS, through the Office of the Chief Architect. The request should briefly outline the reasons for the exemption, describe the mitigation efforts required to achieve the intent of the security requirements (ballistic glazing, wall hardening, landscape barriers, elimination of parking), provide the related costs, and address alternative solutions to the exemption.

All exemption requests will be processed by the Office of the Chief Architect in consultation with the Office of the Federal Protective Service. Exemptions for Lease Construct projects also are to be reviewed by the National Realty Services Officer. The Center for Construction and Project Management in the Office of the Chief Architect can assist in drafting a request for your project. See the PBS Commissioner's Memorandum dated April 26, 2002, for further information, and call the Office of the Chief Architect or the Office of the Federal Protective Service with any questions.

It is assumed that the need to select a site that does not conform to the ISC criteria will be the exception. However, it is recognized that buildings in the central business areas of major cities, as well as annexes and modifications to historic buildings, present additional challenges regarding blast criteria.

Managing the Acquisition

What law regulates the acquisition of property?

The acquisition must be performed in accordance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act and the implementing regulations in 49 CFR, Part 24. The Site Specialist must be both knowledgeable of the Uniform Act requirements and able to communicate them clearly to the property owner.

Are we required to advertise for sites?

While it is usually preferable to advertise for sites, it is not required. Soliciting for sites is one way of “proving” that the alternative is the best one. If a local government has identified an acceptable site for donation or exchange, or if the federal government has an acceptable site, then the advertising process may not be necessary. The evaluation process always must be completed, regardless of how the site is obtained.

Does the site selection process require a competitive procurement?

There is no legal requirement that GSA obtain competition in selecting sites for public buildings, nor is GSA required to solicit proposals for the sale of sites by public advertisement.

In particular, 40 U.S.C. § 3304 (formerly Section 5 of the Public Buildings Act of 1959, 40 U.S.C. § 604) provides in pertinent part:

“(b) Acquisition of Land or Interest in Land for Use as Sites.—The Administrator may acquire land or an interest in land the Administrator considers necessary for use as sites, or additions to sites, for public buildings authorized to be constructed or altered under this chapter.

* * * * *

“(d) Solicitation of Proposals for Sale, Donation, or Exchange of Real Property.—When the Administrator is to acquire a site under subsection (b), the Administrator, if the Administrator considers it necessary, by public advertisement may solicit proposals for the sale, donation, or exchange of real property to the Federal Government to be used as the site. In selecting a site under subsection (b) the Administrator . . . may—

(1) select the site that the Administrator believes is the most advantageous to the Government, all factors considered; and

(2) acquire the site without regard to Title III of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949 (41 U.S.C. 251 et seq.).”

Accordingly, as a matter of law, GSA is not required to comply with the Competition in Contracting Act (CICA), which requires full and open competition and a statement of all significant factors and subfactors that the agency expects to consider in evaluating competitive proposals. Nevertheless, to the extent that GSA's site selection criteria are known and identifiable, disclosure of these criteria enables potential offerors to make more informed decisions regarding whether to submit their sites for consideration. Also, the time involved in site selection is potentially shortened when offerors know the criteria that the government will use and, therefore, can submit more responsive proposals.

Therefore, when site selection is made among competing sites, GSA should notify offerors of at least minimum site requirements and known evaluation criteria. There is still the opportunity, however, to retain discretion for the government to consider other factors, resulting in selection of the most advantageous site. See the sample site advertisement that covers all of these factors ("Appendix D").

How does the team determine the fair market value of a potential site?

During the Feasibility Study, the team relies upon either the Regional appraiser, who should be part of the Site Investigation Team, or a contract appraiser to provide a preliminary estimated value of the potential sites. The appraiser gathers market data, comparable sales data, and tax assessment records during the site investigation visits. Only a limited appraisal or estimate of value is needed at this point.

When the site is selected officially and GSA is ready to begin negotiations, then the team contracts for a fee appraisal, based on title, boundary/topography/utility surveys, and environmental studies (e.g., Phases I, II, III,) that are provided to the appraiser. The government is required to offer "just compensation" for the property, which is to be no less than the approved appraised fair market value (AFMV).

Does GSA pay a broker's commission?

GSA does not pay a broker's commission based on a percentage of a property's appraised value. A broker, however, often represents an individual property owner or assembles a site comprising multiple owners. In such cases, the asking price of land includes a fee for the broker. This does not necessarily increase the AFMV of the property.

How does the team guard against “price inflation,” when the owner learns that the federal government is interested in a site?

If the property owners know the total site budget, then they often expect that the government has “deep pockets.” Many times, the owners will ask how much site money has been budgeted and expect that GSA can offer much more than the AFMV. GSA must control property owners’ expectations by addressing the specific property value and answering the property owners’ questions in an honest, straightforward manner during the site investigation. Maintaining the competitive process as long as possible also discourages this type of expectation.

The owner should be advised that the appraisal will be based on the property’s highest and best use. Any perceived increase or decrease in the value of the property due to the proposed project cannot be considered in the AFMV.

Only arm’s length transactions (or comparable sales of property) are taken into consideration in the valuation of the property. Purchases under the threat of condemnation, or those involving other considerations such as special financing, are not considered comparable.

Is there any reason to advertise when there is an offer to donate a site?

Just because the site is free doesn’t necessarily make it the best site for the project. Soliciting for sites is one way of “proving” that the alternative is the best one, even if no money is involved in the acquisition. The site that is being offered as a donation may not be the only one available for donation. If you read the advertisement for sites included in *GSA Guidebook 1: Acquisition of Real Property*, we ask for donated sites.

However, if we have made a formal commitment or Memorandum of Agreement with a local municipality regarding a site to be donated, then it may not be advisable to advertise for sites. This is one of the reasons we should be very careful not to make binding agreements regarding a site too early in the process (preliminary planning and feasibility stages). The scope of the project may change, programs may change, and so forth. We need to look at all alternatives. If we do not include any money for a site in the Prospectus, expecting to take a donated site, then we had better be sure that we have fully analyzed the site and do not anticipate substantive changes in the project.

How much investigation needs to be performed on a donated site?

Offers of site donations or exchanges should trigger some preliminary site investigative studies. Especially because the shortcomings of free sites may not be readily apparent, these sites require the same level of site investigation and preacquisition due diligence as required for purchased sites. Be sure to follow NEPA, NHPA, appraisal, and title search procedures thoroughly on donated or exchanged sites as early as possible. If there are problems, then you may need to proceed with either mitigation or a new site selection.

How do we respond to a property owner or tenant who asks, “When will you make the site selection? We are thinking about replacing our HVAC system [or carpet, etc.]. Should we spend the money?”

GSA cannot provide advice to a property owner or a tenant on these issues. But, GSA can return offers quickly and advise them when their property is no longer under consideration. If the owner’s site is included in the short list, then the answer must wait until a final site selection is made. However, the “preferred site” is addressed in the NEPA document, which is public information.

In some cases, problems were discovered after a site had been acquired. How do I know whether we have performed enough site investigation studies (hazmat, historical, archaeological, etc.)?

The best way is to talk to the appropriate people (GSA Central Office, consultants, SHPO, local community, etc.) and fully engage them in the process. Make sure that issues from the criteria checklists have been considered fully. Follow through on NEPA and other required studies. Maintain open lines of communications, follow local news stories, ask lots of questions, and maintain an interest in local issues. Don’t rely solely on information provided by brokers or owners. If you learn something questionable, then follow through until you’re satisfied with the answers. Discussions of “lessons learned” with colleagues in other Regions and in the GSA Central Office also can help avoid pitfalls.

NEPA Activities in Site Selection

NEPA Activities in Site Selection

This Site Selection Guide does not try to address the NEPA activities in great detail; GSA's *NEPA Desk Guide* serves that purpose. The following discussion is provided as a summary of the NEPA process and related activities.

The analysis required by the NEPA is an excellent source of information for site selection and site design. The studies provide an understanding of the potential and constraints of the delineated area, as well as the preferred sites, to the Site Investigation Team and, later, to the Design Team.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969

The NEPA requires analysis and a detailed statement of the environmental impact of any proposed federal action that significantly affects the quality of the human environment. The federal government is required to use all practicable means and measures to protect environmental values consistent with other essential considerations of national policy to avoid environmental degradation; preserve historic, cultural, and natural resources; and “promote the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without undesirable and unintentional consequences.” Therefore, the NEPA makes environmental protection a part of the mandate of every federal agency and department.

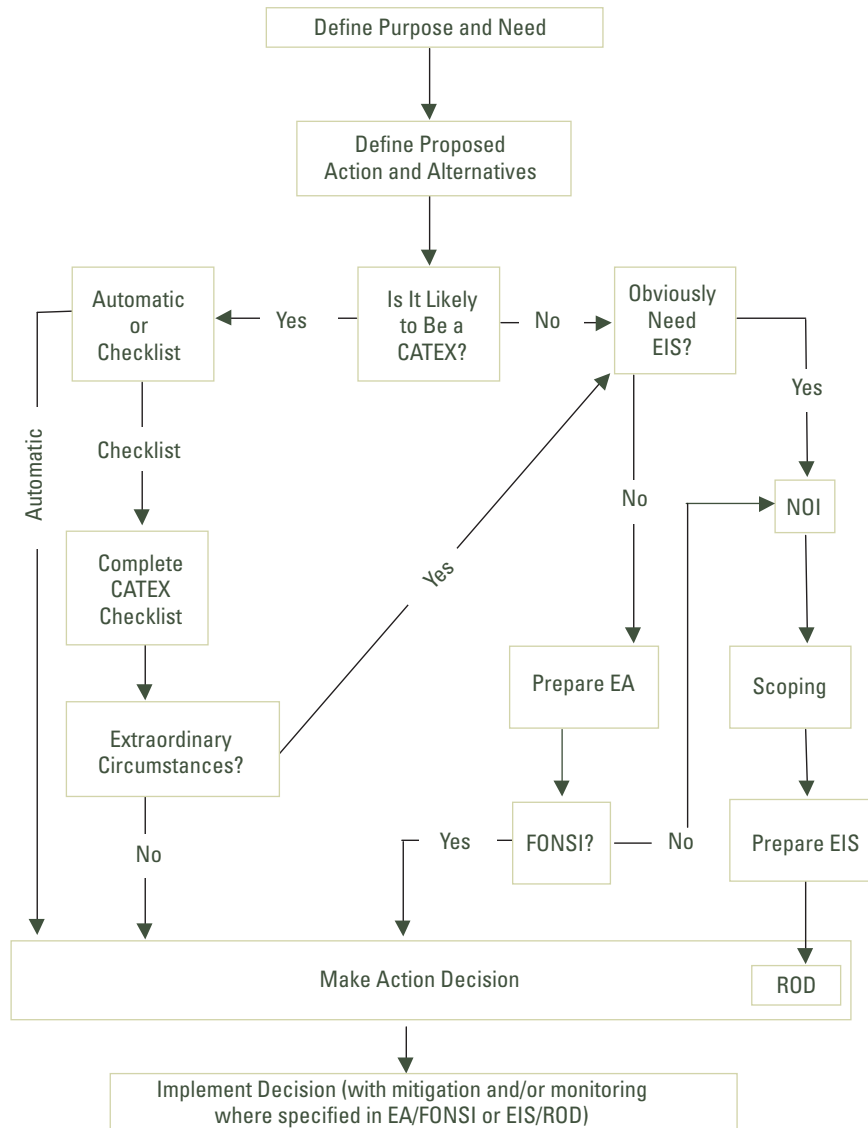
Three Levels of Analysis

Based on the impact of the proposed actions, there are three levels of NEPA analysis:

- Categorical Exclusion (CATEX),
- Environmental Assessment (EA), and
- Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

The Regional Environmental Quality Advisor (REQA) classifies the action with the Team Leader to develop an approach for the level of analysis for each Site Investigation Report. See Exhibit E.1: NEPA in a Nutshell (included from the GSA's *NEPA Desk Guide*) for a summary of this assessment process.

Exhibit E.1: NEPA in a Nutshell



Source: NEPA Desk Guide

Categorical Exclusion (CATEX)

An action that normally does not require the preparation of an EA or an EIS is called a Categorical Exclusion (CATEX). To qualify as a CATEX, the proposed action must not demonstrate any significant impacts on the environment. GSA uses two types of CATEX:

- The “Automatic” CATEX is a type of action that experience has shown never poses a significant impact on the quality of the human environment.
- The “Checklist” CATEX is a type of action that requires completion of a checklist to ensure that extraordinary circumstances do not exist.

More intrusive activities require additional NEPA analysis in the form of an EA or an EIS.

Environmental Assessment (EA)

An Environmental Assessment (EA) is a document that is prepared to determine whether an EIS is necessary. Although a specific format for an EA is not prescribed in the regulations, an EA should include discussions of the need for the proposed action; alternatives, including the proposed action; and a list of agencies and persons consulted. If an agency determines, through an EA, that the proposed action will not have a significant effect on the human environment, then it need not prepare an EIS, but must prepare a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

An Environmental Impact Statement refers to a detailed written statement as required by Section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321 et. seq. An action requires an EIS when it is a major federal action with the potential for demonstrating a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. Agencies should focus on significant environmental issues and alternatives to the proposed action. Documentation for this level of analysis comprises a draft EIS and a final EIS, including responses to agency and public comments, and a Record of Decision (ROD), signed by the Regional Administrator, that describes GSA’s final action decision.

Scoping

Scoping means determining the scope or range of environmental analysis needed. Although scoping is discussed largely in the context of EIS preparation, there actually is a scoping element associated with any kind of NEPA analysis. Scoping is a key tool to help eliminate unimportant issues, focus the analysis on important issues, and prevent redundancy and excess bulk in documents. Scoping streamlines the NEPA process by

limiting the range of analysis to only those issues that are significant. This tool also ensures that a full range of action alternatives is explored and that all potential impacts are identified at the beginning of the planning process.

There are two kinds of scoping: internal and external.

- GSA personnel and contractors carry out internal scoping within GSA. It may be the only kind of scoping done on a CATEX or a simple EA, or it may be used prior to and in conjunction with external scoping. Internal scoping includes interdisciplinary analysis, review of previous actions, and review of pertinent background data. The REQA always should be involved in internal scoping.
- External scoping is required by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations. This aspect includes formal public involvement, discussions with consultants from agencies with jurisdiction by law or expertise, and publication of notices and draft documents. It is used to refine, adjust, or correct the issues identified by internal scoping

Public Participation

The level and kind of public involvement varies widely and depends on the nature of the action and the issues involved. It is important to remember that public involvement establishes ongoing dialogue with concerned members of the public, as feasible, to reach an agreement. Public involvement is appropriate in three phases of the NEPA process:

- During scoping;
- During the actual analysis of alternatives, the affected environment, and potential impacts; and
- During the review of results of analysis as recorded in CATEX Checklists, EAs, and EISs.

Parallel Activities

There are two other categories of studies that may occur during the same time frame as the NEPA activities:

- An Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) is an evaluation of previous environmental conditions.
- Special studies, such as environmental, cultural, and social analysis, provide background for preparing NEPA documents and are interdisciplinary analysis.

The purpose of a Phase I ESA is to identify the site's recognized environmental conditions that resulted from past actions. As such, a Phase I ESA does not meet the requirements of the NEPA to consider the environmental impacts of planned or future actions and decisions.

ESA Activities

Phase I

- Records review
- Site visits
- Interviews

Phase II

- Sampling

Phase III

- Remediation

The relevant information from these studies should be coordinated with the NEPA analysis. The studies themselves may be referenced or included in the appendix. Exhibit E.2 shows NEPA, Environmental Site Assessment, and special studies activities during site selection.

Environmental Site Assessment/CERCLA

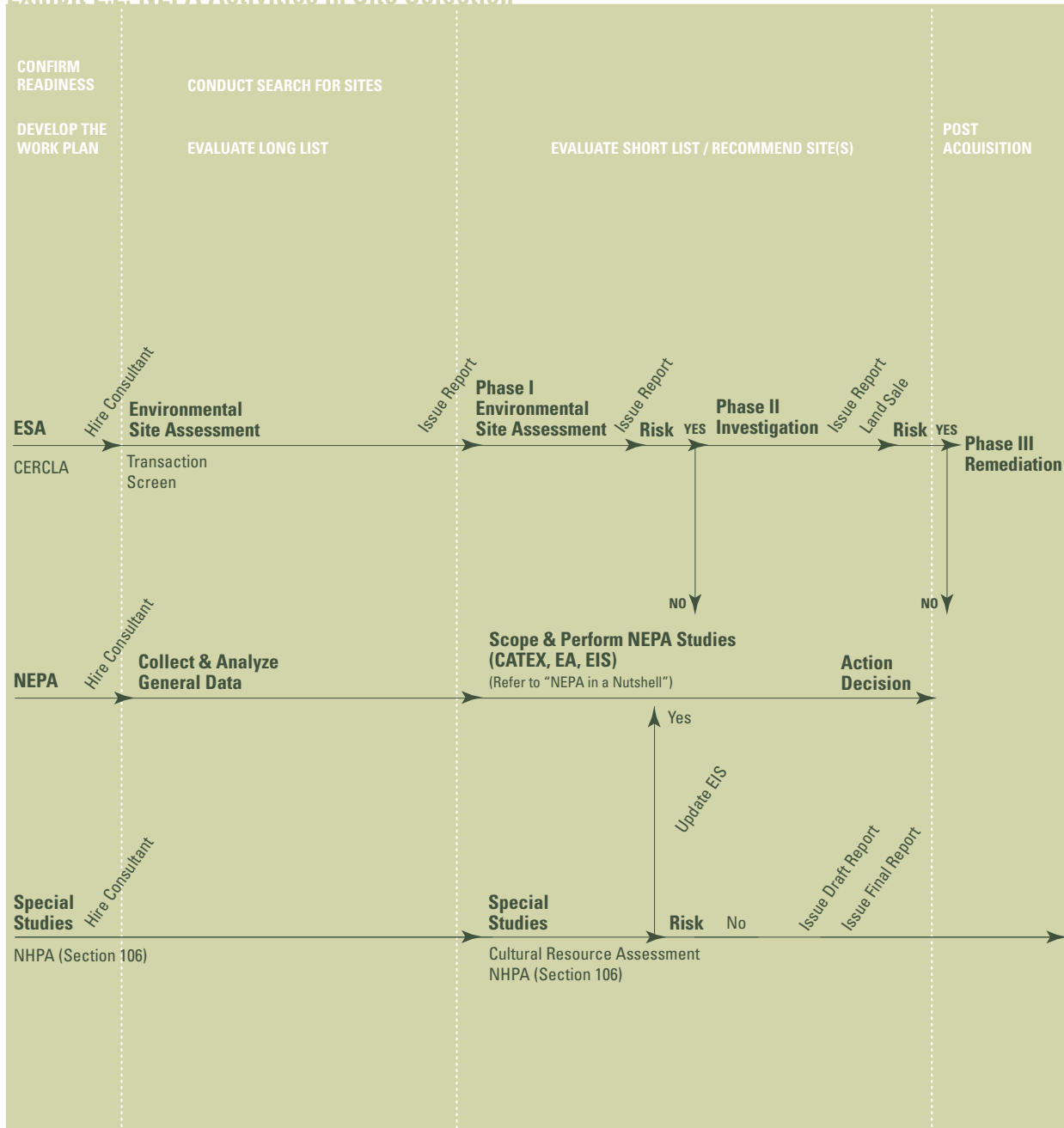
The Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) that is performed for all GSA real property acquisitions is sometimes called a “due diligence process.” In general, this refers to being careful, or diligent, when taking on the responsibilities of real estate ownership. In particular, this refers to being careful that the property being acquired does not entail significant and insurmountable liabilities associated with the cleanup or management of past hazardous waste activities. The Environmental Site Assessment serves as a risk assessment and management tool for environmental liabilities associated with all GSA real estate acquisitions. It is a flexible process. A transaction screen is a commonly used tool for this assessment. The level of assessment will vary from one property to the next, depending upon the nature/type of property; historical use; type of transaction; proposed use of the property; and information obtained in the course of the assessment. Based on the information developed during the ESA, the transferor may be required to perform additional cleanup, or restrictions on the full use of the property may come to light. In addition, the assessment may reveal that the transferor must provide special assurances to GSA that the transferor will maintain any cleanup remedies in place (e.g., a cap on a landfill) and perform any additional cleanup required after transfer. Indeed, it is possible that the ESA may determine that a given site is a “No Go,” as discussed throughout this Guide, because of the unaddressed or unaddressable risks to human health and the environment posed by contamination at a given parcel.

Phase I

The purpose of a Phase I ESA is to identify the site’s recognized environmental conditions that resulted from past actions. However, these studies do provide background information for NEPA documents. Relevant information obtained as a result of Phase I or Phase II ESAs should be reviewed by GSA experts, summarized, and coordinated with NEPA documentation. Phases I and II ESAs can be included in the appendix of NEPA documentation or included by reference.

Phase I ESAs involve reviewing records; performing a site visit; and interviewing owners, occupants, and local government officials. A trained and experienced environmental professional must conduct this work. In addition, because a Phase I ESA includes reviews of local government files and interviews, adequate lead time is important.

Exhibit E.2: NEPA Activities in Site Selection



Waiting until the last minute can hinder the quality of work performed and, thus, increase the risk of overlooking an important detail.

Phase II

If the Phase I ESA determines that hazardous substances may be present, then a Phase II ESA usually is conducted to confirm the presence or extent of contamination. This is accomplished by collecting and analyzing samples.

Phase III

The Phase III ESA finding concludes with a recommendation for site remediation necessary to mitigate the identified adverse environmental impacts. This finding includes available remedial options and their respective estimated costs. Phase III ESA remediation is performed after site acquisition. The level of remediation anticipated may be quantified to assist in evaluating alternatives or in negotiating the terms of the lease or site purchase.

Generally, a Phase III ESA is not incorporated into the NEPA analysis since it usually is not conducted until after the decision has been made and the site acquisition has been completed. When the current site owner or offeror agrees to complete the remediation, it generally would not be done until after the lease or purchase agreement has been signed.

Special Studies

Special studies include those environmental, cultural, social, and other types of analysis that may be necessary as part of the NEPA analysis planning process for a project. Decisions about the need for and kinds of special studies should be based on scoping. Begin performing any necessary special studies as early as possible in the course of EA or EIS analysis (and, when necessary, in the course of completing a CATEX Checklist). Special studies take time, and if a study begins too late, then it can hold up completion of both the NEPA review and the project schedule.

The following are some common types of studies needed for GSA NEPA analysis:

- Environmental Justice studies
- Social impact assessments
- Cultural resource studies/NHPA section 106
- Environmental due diligence reports
- Floodplain delineations

- Wetland delineations
- Air quality studies
- Water quality studies
- Natural resources studies
- Endangered species surveys

These studies provide the background for preparing NEPA documents (EAs and EISs), which form the basis for environmental decision-making. Special study reports are hardly ever suitable for inclusion “as is” in a NEPA document. In-house experts must review the reports and analyze and summarize the data, as appropriate. These reports often are appended to NEPA documents, or included by reference and made available for inspection by the interested public.

Special studies should not be performed in isolation from one another. Remember that NEPA requires interdisciplinary analysis, not merely multidisciplinary analysis. This means that the various disciplines, performing various studies, should interact with one another, share data, and cooperate in information gathering and analysis. This coordination can result in significant cost efficiencies because the same data or analytic method often may be useful to more than one study.

Cultural Resource Studies/NHPA Section 106

Many GSA projects require cultural resource or historic preservation studies. Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) requires that GSA consider the effects of its undertakings on historic properties—defined as districts, sites, buildings (over 45 years old), structures, and objects included in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (a list of significant historic properties maintained by the National Park Service)—and provide the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) with an opportunity to comment on those effects. Section 106 is a multiphase evaluation starting with general research and, potentially, resulting in full archaeological excavation and capture. The objective of Section 106 review is the mitigation of adverse effects on historic properties resulting from previous undertakings.

Actions considered an “undertaking” require a determination of the “area of potential effect” (APE). The APE is determined by conducting a Cultural Resource Assessment, in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) or Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO), as appropriate. Once agreement is reached on the APE, a

more detailed evaluation of the effect of the undertaking on historic properties within the APE is prepared, and the agency's finding of effect is submitted for review. If GSA determines that there will be no adverse effect on historic properties, and if the SHPO or THPO concurs, then the agency has completed the review. If GSA determines that an undertaking will have an adverse effect on historic properties, then the agency works in consultation with the SHPO or THPO to resolve those effects (e.g., building demolition, disruption of an archaeological site) either through avoidance or mitigation.

Section 106 provides for the preparation of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), which stipulates how adverse effects are to be resolved. This document is signed by the agency as well as by the SHPO or THPO. If the agency and the SHPO or THPO cannot reach an agreement on a finding of adverse effect and its mitigation, then the matter can be referred to the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation for comment, or the site(s) can be deemed unacceptable.

References

"Appendix B: Major Federal Laws, Executive Orders, Regulations, and GSA Directives"

GSA Site Selection Guidebook 1: Acquisition of Real Property, "Appendix 1: Fact Sheet on Summaries of NEPA, Associated Laws, and Executive Orders"; "Appendix 2: Fact Sheet—Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA)"; "Appendix 3: Statutes, Regulations, and Administrative Directives That Influence and Control Site Selection"; "Appendix 4: List of Regional Environmental Specialists"; "Appendix 5: Examples of Site Selection Criteria"; "Appendix 7: Fact Sheet on E.O. 11988—Floodplain Management"; "Appendix 11: Fact Sheet—Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)"; "Appendix 12: Fact Sheet—GSA Policy on Environmental Justice"; "Appendix 18: Specifications for GSA Site Investigation Report—GSA Form 1433"; "Appendix 19: Site Acquisition Time Line"; "Appendix 20: Utilities List Form"; "Appendix 21: Site Investigation—List of Items Needed"; "Appendix 22: Tabulation of Undesirable Characteristics"; "Appendix 23: Construction Management Site Data Inventory—GSA Form 1239"; "Appendix 24: Fact Sheet—Environmental Site Assessments (ESAs)"; "Appendix 25: Environmental Site Assessment Criteria"; "Appendix 26: Cultural Resource Assessment (Phase I) Requirements"; "Appendix 27: Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Requirements"; "Appendix 28: Environmental Assessment (EA) Requirements"

U.S. General Services Administration, Public Buildings Service, October 1999, *National Environmental Policy Act: NEPA Desk Guide*; To access GSA NEPA PORTAL: www.insite.PBS.gsa.gov/pxe; National Historic Preservation Act 1966, gsa.gov/attachments/GSA_POLICIES/pol/nhpa.pdf; U.S. General Services Administration. *GSA Environmental Book*, hydra.gsa.gov/pbs/pt/call-in/envbook/ebook.htm; U.S. General Services Administration, Public Buildings Service, Historic Buildings Program, *A Guide to Cultural Resource and Historic Preservation Information*, www.gsa.gov/Portal/content/products_content.jsp?contentOID=115580&contentType=1007

Appendices

Appendix A: Glossary

Abbreviations and Acronyms

ABP	Asset Business Plan
ACHP	Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
A/E	Architecture/engineering firm
ARA	Assistant Regional Administrator
BA51	Budget Activity 51 (Prospectus level)
BA61	Budget Activity 61 (study monies and salaries)
BER	Building Evaluation Report (or Building Condition Assessment)
CADD	Computer-aided design and drafting
CATEX	Categorical Exclusion (National Environmental Policy Act process)
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CILP	Capital Investment and Leasing Program
CO	Contracting Officer representing the General Services Administration and the U.S. government
COR	Contracting Officer's Representative (prime contact for contractors)
COTR	Contracting Officer's Technical Representative
EA	Environmental Assessment
ECCA	Estimated construction cost at award
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EO	Executive Order
ESA	Environmental Site Assessment
FAR	Floor area ratio
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FONSI	Finding of No Significant Impact

Appendix A: Glossary (cont.)

FS	Feasibility Study
GSA	General Services Administration
LEED	Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design
LPP	Local Portfolio Plan
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NOI	Notice of Intent
NTP	Notice to Proceed (given by the Contracting Officer)
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
<i>P-100</i>	<i>Facilities Standards for the Public Buildings Service</i>
PBS	Public Buildings Service
PDS	Prospectus Development Study
PMP	Project Management Plan
POR	Program of Requirements
PT	Office of Portfolio Management
RA	Regional Administrator
REQA	Regional Environmental Quality Advisor
ROD	Record of Decision
RWA	Reimbursable Work Authorization
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Officer
SIR	Site Investigation Report
<i>USCDG</i>	<i>U.S. Courts Design Guide</i>

Definitions

11-B: An 11-B is a congressionally required study in which GSA reports to Congress regarding the housing needs of a specific locality. This study may or may not recommend a new project. If it does, then the need for the project must be justified through a study such as a Local Portfolio Plan or a Prospectus Development Study.

Allowance Document: The Allowance Document transfers the appropriated funds to the Region.

Architect/Engineer (A/E): The A/E is the architecture/engineering firm selected to perform the design of a project.

Asset Business Plan (ABP): The ABP is a document that provides all information, strategy, and long-term plans necessary to manage the business of operating and optimizing an asset. The GSA Asset Business Plan is a Web-based asset management tool that provides building history and projections for many areas, including space and income, that are used to develop long-range strategies for the asset, reinvestment plans, and capital investment priorities.

Building Evaluation Report (BER): The Building Condition Assessment is done through a BER that documents the condition and deficiencies of a building. GSA will identify the BER work (called work items) that is to be addressed by the Prospectus Development Study (PDS). However, a PDS also must recognize other impacted work that may not be fully described in the BER work items or the Feasibility Study.

Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA): BOMA provides information to and a network forum for industry professionals.

Categorical Exclusion (CATEX): Under the National Environmental Policy Act, a CATEX is an action that normally does not require the preparation of an Environmental Assessment or an Environmental Impact Statement.

Communications Plan: A Communications Plan identifies spokespersons for GSA, the customer agency, and stakeholders; schedules key communications to be disseminated in conjunction with project milestones; identifies potential issues; and includes strategies for responding to those issues.

Computer-Aided Design (CAD): All new construction and major renovations entail drawings created in a standard GSA format, with the help of computer-based programs such as CAD.

Appendix A: Glossary (cont.)

Cost Benchmark: A Cost Benchmark is the cost model, based on real, similar facilities, used to evaluate project costs for a similar type of building.

Customer Billing Record (CBR): The CBR is the mechanism that GSA uses to establish rent billing and is created through an Occupancy Agreement.

Design Excellence: For projects that require significant architectural and engineering treatment, programming direction must reflect GSA's commitment to Design Excellence. General design principles and philosophies are presented in the architecture and interior design chapter of the *Facilities Standards for the Public Buildings Handbook*.

Due Diligence: "Environmental Due Diligence" is a term that describes the responsibilities of a landowner, such as GSA, to conduct an appropriate inquiry prior to the purchase or development of a parcel of commercial real estate and ensure that all "recognized conditions" have been identified.

Environmental Assessment (EA): The EA is a concise public document that is prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to determine whether a federal action would significantly affect the environment and thus require preparation of a more detailed Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). It also

- Briefly provides sufficient evidence and analysis for determining whether to prepare an EIS or a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI);
- Aids in an agency's compliance with the NEPA when no EIS is necessary, which leads to a FONSI; and
- Facilitates preparation of an EIS when one is necessary.

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS): The National Environmental Policy Act requires that federal agencies prepare an EIS for major projects or legislative proposals that significantly affect the environment. It is a decision-making tool that describes the positive and negative effects of the undertaking and lists alternative actions. An EIS is a detailed study that leads to a Record of Decision. It records decisions made and mitigation measures that relate to the environmental impacts of a project.

Environmental Site Assessment (ESA): An ESA is a study of a property's past use, the environmental conditions at the site and adjoining sites, and the likely presence of hazardous substances. An ESA can contribute to the "innocent landowner" defense under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act. (CERCLA)

Facilities Standards for the Public Buildings Service: The *P-100* is the primary GSA design criteria/standards document and is typically referenced for compliance in architecture/engineering firm contracts.

Feasibility Study: GSA uses this study to evaluate Prospectus-level proposed projects to ensure that they meet tenant agency space needs and government-owned facility requirements. This study also determines the preferred alternative and basis for preparing a Prospectus Development Study, which will meet the housing needs of the customer agency.

Funding Appropriation: Congress sets aside funding for a project or a particular use.

Funding Authorization: Congress approves funding for a project or a particular use. (Funds must be authorized and appropriated before becoming available for a project.)

General Construction Cost Review Guide (GCCRG): The Public Buildings Service *General Construction Cost Review Guide*, which is generally published yearly, provides costs to construct space by space type, escalation and location factors by localities, and a system for developing Cost Benchmarks.

Input Document: An input document is a supporting document, study, or report used to complete the Feasibility Study.

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED): GSA has adopted the LEED rating system of the U.S. Green Building Council as a measure for sustainable design. The *P-100* and the Capital Investment and Leasing Program (CILP) require that all new and fully renovated building projects meet criteria for basic LEED Certification (higher levels of achievement are Silver, Gold, and Platinum). As of fiscal year 2003, all new and fully renovated buildings must meet a Silver LEED rating.

Lease Construction: Lease construction is new construction of a facility for government use in response to GSA's formal solicitation for offers. The construction may be on either a preselected site assigned by GSA to the successful offeror or the offeror's site.

Local Portfolio Plan (LPP): The LPP is a document that provides the method for managing local portfolios and client needs within a specific locality. The LPP provides the basis for market considerations; long-term tenant needs; existing leased and owned facilities; and community considerations to make decisions related to markets, tenant housing, and hold/divest decision-making.

Appendix A: Glossary (cont.)

Long List: A long list is a list of all prospective sites considered in the site selection process.

Notice of Intent (NOI): The NOI describes the proposed action, possible alternatives, and the proposed NEPA scoping process. It states the name and address of a person within GSA who can answer questions about the proposed action and EIS.

Occupancy Agreement (OA): An Occupancy Agreement is similar to a lease between GSA and each tenant agency in a building that establishes the rent and space assignment for each agency.

Pro Forma: The investment pro forma analyzes the predicted return on investment and income potential of the project.

Program of Requirements (POR): The POR defines the scope of the project and the tenant improvements or reimbursables associated with a project.

Project Development Rating Index (PDRI): The GSA project team performs a project evaluation, utilizing the Construction Industry Institute's PDRI process, prior to submitting the Feasibility Study or Prospectus Development Study for funding a capital project. This process determines the Project Team's effectiveness in preparing a quality submission and assures minimization of risks and mitigation of potential negative issues. This self-evaluation aids in determining areas of project development that may need additional work or study prior to the project's submission for funding.

Project Management Plan (PMP): This is defined on the GSA/PBS Web site. For Project Management Plan requirements, visit pmcoe.gsa.gov/What_We_Offer/what_we_offer.asp.

Prospectus: The Prospectus is a formal document sent to the Office of Management and Budget and Congress to receive funding authorization. It includes project scope information, budget, and schedule, plus a housing plan. This, if approved, results in authorization letters from both the House and Senate that approve the project, whereas an appropriations bill actually funds the project.

Public Buildings Service (PBS): The General Services Administration's Public Buildings Service organization manages, owns, and constructs space for housing federal agencies.

Short List: The sites on the short list are the best candidates from the long list and are further evaluated to develop a recommendation for site acquisition. The short list typically includes three (3) sites.

Site Directive (also referred to as Limited Site Directive): The Office of the Chief Architect issues the Site Directive either after the President's proposed Budget (which includes the Site Design and Prospectus) is submitted to Congress or after Congress approves and the President signs the Budget. With receipt of the Site Directive, Regions are authorized to begin formal site selection actions (and acquisition and professional services procurement actions) up to the point of award. The award is contingent upon project authorization and funding appropriation by Congress.

System for Tracking and Administering Real Property (STAR): STAR is GSA's building inventory database for space management, leases, and rent billing.

Transaction Screen: The Transaction Screen (see ASTM E 1528-93, Environmental Site Assessments) is an inquiry process designed to meet CERCLA's "innocent landowner" defense, but does not require the judgement of an environmental professional. It includes a questionnaire with guidelines for interviewing owners and occupants of a property, observing site conditions, and conducting limited research. Based on the results, the user can determine whether additional information is required, proceed to a Phase I ESA, or research other areas of concern. The same type of process can be applied to other lines of inquiry.

Work Plan: The Work Plan is a key tool that the team can use to manage the site selection process. The Work Plan includes information relating to a project's staff, schedule, scope, budget, approvals, controls, and communications.

Appendix B: Major Federal Laws, Executive Orders, Regulations, and GSA Directives

Real Property Acquisition

Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4601–4655; and implementing regulations in 49 CFR, Part 24

40 U.S.C. §§ 3301–3315 (formerly the Public Buildings Act of 1959, 40 U.S.C. §§ 601–619)

Federal Management Regulation Part 102–73—
Real Estate Acquisition, 41 CFR, Part 102–73

PBS Commissioner’s Memorandum, “Implementation of the Interagency Security Committee (ISC) Design Criteria Regarding Site Selection,” April 26, 2002

Location, Consultation, & Coordination

Rural Development Act, 7 U.S.C. § 2204b-1

Farmlands Protection Act, 7 U.S.C. §§ 4201 et seq.

40 U.S.C. §§ 901–905 (formerly the Federal Urban Land Use Act, 40 U.S.C. §§ 531–535)

Federal Management Regulation Part 102–83 —
Location of Space, 41 CFR, Part 102–83

E.O. 11988, “Floodplain Management,” May 24, 1977

E.O. 12072, “Federal Space Management,” August 16, 1978

E.O. 13006, “Locating Federal Facilities on Historic Properties in Our Nation’s Central Cities,” May 21, 1996

Historic Preservation

American Indian Religious Freedom Act,
42 U.S.C. §§ 1996–1996a

Archaeological Resource Protection Act,
16 U.S.C. §§ 470aa–470mm

National Historic Preservation Act,
16 U.S.C. §§ 470 et seq.

Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation
Act, 23 U.S.C. §§ 3001 et seq.

Religious Freedom Restoration Act,
42 U.S.C. §§ 2000bb–2000bb-4

Federal Management Regulation Part 102–78—
Historic Preservation, 41 CFR, Part 102–78

E.O. 13007, “Indian Sacred Sites,” May 24, 1996

Environmental Protection

Clean Air Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 7401 et seq.

Coastal Zone Management Act,
16 U.S.C. §§ 1451 et seq.

Comprehensive Environmental Response,
Compensation, and Liability Act,
42 U.S.C. §§ 9601 et seq.

Endangered Species Act, 16 U.S.C. §§ 1531 et seq.

Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act,
16 U.S.C. §§ 661 et seq.

Federal Water Pollution Control Act (Clean Water
Act), 33 U.S.C. §§ 1251–263 et seq.

National Environmental Policy Act,
42 U.S.C. §§ 4321 et seq.

Appendix B: Major Federal Laws, Executive Orders, Regulations, and GSA Directives (cont.)

Environmental Protection (cont.)

Safe Drinking Water Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 300f et seq.

Solid Waste Disposal Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 6901 et seq.

Toxic Substance Control Act, 15 U.S.C. §§ 2601 et seq.

Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, 16 U.S.C. §§ 1271 et seq.

E.O. 11514, "Protection and Enhancement of Environmental Quality," March 5, 1970; as amended by E.O. 11991, May 24, 1977

E.O. 11593, "Protection and Enhancement of Cultural Environment," May 13, 1971

E.O. 11990, "Protection of Wetlands," May 24, 1977

E.O. 12088, "Federal Compliance With Pollution Control Standards," October 13, 1978; as amended by E.O. 12580, January 23, 1987

E.O. 12580, "Superfund Implementation," January 23, 1987; as amended by E.O. 12777, October 18, 1991, and E.O. 13016, August 28, 1996

E.O. 12898, "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations," February 11, 1994

E.O. 13101, "Greening the Government Through Waste Prevention, Recycling, and Federal Acquisition," September 14, 1998

E.O. 13123, "Greening the Government Through Efficient Energy Management," December 2, 1999

Appendix C: Site Investigation Team Roles/Responsibilities and Worksheet

Roles/Responsibilities	GSA	Outsource
<p>Team Leader</p> <p>The Team Leader can be from any discipline, for example, real estate, asset management, or project management, as long as he or she has a thorough knowledge of the site selection process, real estate transactions, and the Uniform Relocation Act. Some of these duties also can be accomplished by other GSA staff and consultants. The Team Leader can allocate distribution of responsibilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has knowledge of Uniform Relocation Act, complex real estate transactions, and condemnation. • Plans, coordinates, leads, and assigns team responsibilities. • Prepares and publishes newspaper advertisements soliciting site(s) and donation of site(s). • Opens and records all offers received. • Prepares a synopsis of all offered sites. • Leads team to identify and inspect unoffered sites that are deemed to be suitable for consideration. • Photographs all sites, interviews offerors, and answers acquisition and relocation questions. • Arranges meetings with local municipalities; guides team in analyzing sites; and gathers all reports, correspondence, and data for inclusion in the Site Investigation Report (SIR). • Compiles the data and writes the SIR. • Acts as primary contact with property owners regarding the site investigation. • Gathers data for relocation estimate and preliminary survey of site. • Serves as single point of contact for the Communications Plan. 	■	

Appendix C: Site Investigation Team Roles/Responsibilities and Worksheet (cont.)

Roles/Responsibilities	GSA	Outsource
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Asset/Portfolio Manager



- Ensures that site selection maintains Prospectus integrity (i.e., size, delineated area, cost).
- Ensures NEPA and NHPA Section 106 compliance.
- Obtains floodplain/wetland status.
- Conducts initial research on land use and local plan compatibility (Comprehensive Plan, Master Plan, Redevelopment Districts, ordinances, special plans, etc.) with the proposed action.
- Follows up with local planning and other applicable departments.

Communications Specialist



- Works with Team Leader to develop Communications Plan for project.
- Assists in outreach to community and stakeholders.
- Drafts communications for release to the public and the media.
- Assists Team Leader with development and release of all external and internal communications.

Local GSA Regional Officer/Urban Development Specialist



This person may have a different title, but will be a virtual part of the Urban Development Center.

- Provides team input and guidance regarding the coordination with local communities and stakeholders.
- Identifies local entities that can bring alternate sites and solutions to bear on the site selection process.
- Coordinates meetings with local municipalities, development organizations, and other stakeholders for the purpose of design charrettes and so forth.

Roles/Responsibilities

GSA

Outsource

Project Manager



- Facilitates resolution of issues and problems through the GSA Central Office, ARA, and local managers.
- Ensures that appropriate funds and human resources are available to support the team.
- Acts as customer agency liaison with Regional Account Manager.
- Works with Asset Manager to determine delineated area and agency-specific selection criteria.
- Advises team on overall project schedule and when site selection impacts design award and demolition.
- Integrates all program schedules into overall Project Management Plan.
- Answers design and construction questions and concerns of offerors and local stakeholders.

Regional Counsel



This is a team support member who is called upon as needed for legal advice and typically does not accompany the team on site investigation trips.

- Assures compliance with all environmental and acquisition laws and advises the team on legal questions that may arise regarding aspects of acquiring the property. Consults with the team on complicated title issues and condemnation aspects of site selection.
- Reviews NEPA and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) or Record of Decision (ROD) to ensure compliance with environmental laws before site is officially selected.
- Reviews agent's authorizations for legal sufficiency and reviews offers.

Appendix C: Site Investigation Team Roles/Responsibilities and Worksheet (cont.)

Roles/Responsibilities

GSA

Outsource

Regional Counsel (cont.)

- Participates in the development and review of Memorandums of Agreement with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). Consults on content of other documents, as requested.

Regional Environmental Quality Advisor

■

- Provides technical advice to the team.
- Manages and reviews all GSA NEPA analysis.
- Acts as primary contact for NEPA activities and oversees NEPA process for projects in the Region.

Regional Historic Preservation Officer

■

- Determines need for archaeological/cultural resource studies.
- Communicates and coordinates with SHPO and Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.
- Reviews consultants' reports and summarizes results and recommendations.
- Acts as the Contracting Officer's Technical Representative (COTR) for consultants' contracts.
- Participates in and/or leads public meetings regarding the cultural resources impacted by the project, for example, historic buildings or districts, archaeological resources.

Regional Realty Representative or Designee

■

This person participates as customer agency liaison on site-specific lease construction site investigations. He or she also leases and assigns space in federal buildings.

- Receives information for review and comment on federal construction sites.

Roles/Responsibilities

GSA

Outsource

- Coordinates with customer to establish preferred delineated area in accordance with the Prospectus (if applicable).
- Coordinates with customer to establish agency-specific selection criteria.
- Prepares and negotiates the assignable options.
- Assists in analyzing site alternatives.

Customer Agency Representative

■

This person can make site decisions for the customer agency and accompany the team on the investigation and inspection of sites. Some agencies may prefer to receive information for review, comment, and approval of a recommended site.

- Participates in both the analyzing and ranking sites.

Architect/Engineer

■

■

- Prepares Building Program Assessment.
- Manages subsurface/geological information and studies. Obtains floodplain and seismic data for alternate sites and ensures that site costs include provisions for each if necessary.
- Evaluates utilities/energy availability, capacity.
- Reviews zoning information, conducts Building and Zoning Code reviews.
- Develops Master Plan.
- Prepares site plans (proposed building footprint, parking, setbacks) for short-listed sites.
- Develops drawings of site's existing conditions/improvements.
- Checks information on streets/traffic, topography, demolition/clearing of site.
- Ensures that sustainable design criteria are considered in the site selection, as well as in the feasibility/site drawings.

Appendix C: Site Investigation Team Roles/Responsibilities and Worksheet (cont.)

Roles/Responsibilities	GSA	Outsource
<hr/> <p>Real Estate Appraiser</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gathers ownership information for unoffered sites. • Gathers tax information and comparable sales data. • Develops preliminary estimate of value for top three (3) sites. • Acts as COTR for fee appraiser contract. 	■	■
<hr/> <p>Real Estate Due Diligence Consultant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepares Building Condition Assessment or Building Evaluation Report (BER) if applicable. • Prepares time line for capital improvements. • Prepares Building and Zoning Code reviews. 	■	■
<hr/> <p>Security Assessment Specialist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verifies all federal security requirements. • Ensures that proper security design criteria, setbacks, and so forth are incorporated into site plans and Feasibility Studies. • Provides crime statistics and special security studies as required. • Inspects sites with the team and assists in analyzing the security risks and costs associated with each site. 	■	■
<hr/> <p>Archaeological Consultant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assists the Regional Historic Preservation Officer with archaeological/cultural resource studies. 		■

Roles/Responsibilities**GSA****Outsource**

Civil Engineering Consultant

■

- This person may perform some of the tasks listed under Architect/Engineer. Conducts land survey.
- Conducts special studies for storm water runoff/retention and so forth.
- Conducts site planning, master planning, and land use planning in concert with Architect.

Construction Consultant

■

- Provides detailed cost estimating.
- Ensures constructability.
- Provides these services on a limited-scope basis. (This task is distinct from site design. The design contract should not be awarded until the site is identified.)

Environmental Due Diligence Consultant

■

Most regions use an umbrella environmental services contract.

- Conducts NEPA study.
- Conducts Phases I, II, and III Environmental Site Assessments, as required.
- Assists with NHPA, archaeological, and cultural resource studies, as required.

Financial Consultant

■

- Assists in determining project's financial viability.

Appendix C: Site Investigation Team Roles/Responsibilities and Worksheet (cont.)

Roles/Responsibilities	GSA	Outsource
<hr/> Geotechnical (Soils) Engineering Consultant <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prepares soil bearing analysis and report.• Prepares hydrology/geology reports.		■
<hr/> Real Estate Broker/Consultant <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assists in locating sites and providing demographic information.• Assists in title search, market research, and trends analysis.• Functions as Site Investigation Advisor.		■
<hr/> Traffic Engineer <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conducts traffic study and provides consulting services.		■

Using the Team Roles/Responsibilities Worksheet

The Team Leader uses the worksheet to develop a complete roster of GSA team and contractor roles/expertise and to identify the appropriate level of responsibility for each team member for each step of their involvement in the project. This exercise provides information to manage individual and team member activities, support efficient coordination across the team, and keep the activities moving smoothly and on schedule.

To complete the worksheet, select the appropriate roster of GSA team members and contractors for the project (adding or deleting roles as required). The descriptions of team roles and responsibilities on the previous pages may be helpful. Next, identify the level of responsibility for each step of their involvement. Finally, share the completed worksheet with all GSA team members and contractors.

The six levels of project responsibility are listed below.

1. Authorizes and/or actuates
2. Approves
3. Performs
4. Recommends and/or reviews and counsels
5. Must be notified or consulted
6. Receives documentation

Appendix C: Site Investigation Team Roles/Responsibilities Worksheet

Task/Site Investigation Team Members	Team Leader	Asset/ Portfolio Manager	Communications Specialist	Urban Development Specialist	Project Manager	Regional Counsel	Regional Environmental Quality Advisor	Regional Historic Preservation Officer	Regional Realty Representative
Step 1: Confirm Readiness									
Review Feasibility Study and other documents									
Confirm status of project approvals and funding									
Step 2: Develop the Work Plan									
Select Site Investigation Team									
Develop Work Plan									
Review general, technical, and financial criteria									
Develop Communications Plan									
Step 3: Conduct Search for Sites									
Commence discussions with customer agency and community									
Finalize evaluation factors <i>Commence NEPA, ESA, NHPA studies</i>									
Advertise for sites									
Conduct site tours and site searches									
Compile offers									
Step 4: Evaluate Long List									
<i>Continue NEPA, ESA, NHPA studies</i> Evaluate long list									
Select short list of sites									
Communicate short list to stakeholders									
Notify offerors									
Step 5: Evaluate Short List/Recommend Site(s)									
Conduct detailed site evaluation <i>Complete NEPA, ESA, NHPA studies</i>									
Communicate/review recommendations									
Prepare final Site Investigation Report									
Recommend preferred site(s)									

Appendix D: Sample Advertisement

U.S. GOVERNMENT WANTS TO ACQUIRE SITE ANYTOWN, ANY STATE, USA

Public notice is given that the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) will conduct an investigation of possible sites to be used for the construction of a U.S. courthouse in Anytown, Any State, USA. As part of this investigation, GSA hereby solicits a no-cost option to purchase property or a donation of a site to the United States of America.

A minimum site area of approximately three (3) acres is required within the delineated area bounded as follows:

EAST: 2nd Avenue NE
SOUTH: 3rd Street NE
WEST: 1st Avenue NW
NORTH: 6th Street NW

Owners of parcels aggregating less than the size of the site specified, but to which abutting parcels may be added to produce a site of the required size, are encouraged to offer such properties for inspection. The Federal Government is soliciting sites that are for sale, as well as sites that may be donated. Offers of a no-cost option to purchase property or for a donation of a site should be submitted in letter form and should include an accurate description and sketch of the site offered. Offers should be received on or before **Month, Day, Year**.

Owners may submit their own proposals. Proposals submitted by agents must be accompanied by documentary evidence of the agent's authority to make such offers. This is to advise those persons submitting offers that due to procedural regulations under certain laws, options should remain open through **Month, Day, Year**. The government will make every effort to expedite the site selection.

Representatives of the General Services Administration will be in **(City), (State)**, the week of **(dates)** and may be contacted on **(dates)** from **(hrs)** to **(hrs)** at the **building address and room number and telephone number**.

This site acquisition is being conducted pursuant to statutory authority contained in 40 U.S.C §§ 3301–3315 (formerly the Public Buildings Act of 1959, 40 U.S.C. §§ 601–619). Pursuant to this authority, GSA is authorized to conduct this site selection without regard to the competitive procurement procedures contained in Title III of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, as amended, commonly referred to as the Competition in Contracting Act.

The following criteria are being used to consider offered sites that satisfy the minimum requirements:

(List minimum requirements applicable to all sites, e.g., size, location in delineated area, zoning, physical elements, and other minimal “Go/No Go” criteria.)

(List general evaluation factors, known and identifiable at the time of publication of the notice, which will be applicable to all sites, e.g., distance from public transportation, proximity to the airport, environmental considerations.)

In compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act and E.O. 13006, when operationally appropriate and economically prudent, the government will consider historic buildings and sites within historic districts. Demolition of historic buildings in anticipation of Government use may disqualify an offeror from consideration. Additional information is available by visiting www.gsa.gov/historicpreservation or by contacting GSA at the address listed below.

Mail responses to the following address:

General Services Administration
Janice K. Kuykendall
Director, SARCOE
819 Taylor St. NW
Fort Worth, TX 76126
Phone: 817-978-4662

In addition to the above criteria, the total project cost, comprising both the site acquisition cost and estimated development and operating costs, will be considered. The Government will select the site deemed to be most advantageous to the United States, all factors considered. In order to ensure that the selected site is most advantageous to the United States, the Government also will consider any unique attributes or other nuances of a site deemed worthy of consideration, even if not listed in the advertisement.

None of the above-listed evaluation criteria is considered to be more important than any other. However, as sites are evaluated, each site’s unique attributes may result in one or more criteria becoming more important with respect to that particular site.

This advertisement is not a basis for negotiation, and the right is hereby reserved, as the interest of the government may require, to reject any or all offers and give consideration to sites other than those offered in response to this advertisement.

Appendix E: Professional Organizations and Resources for Site Selection

Community Planning and Development

American Farmland Trust (AFT)

1200 18th St. NW
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: 202-331-7300
Fax: 202-659-8339
info@farmland.org
www.farmland.org

AFT works to stop the loss of productive farmland and to promote farming practices that lead to a healthy environment.

Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU)

The Hearst Building
5 Third St.
Suite 725
San Francisco, CA 94103-3296
Phone: 415-495-2255
Fax: 415-495-1731
cnuinfo@cnu.org
www.cnu.org

CNU works with architects, developers, planners, and others involved in the creation of cities and towns, teaching them how to implement the principles of New Urbanism (coherent regional planning; walkable neighborhoods; and attractive, accommodating civic spaces).

Development Training Institute (DTI)

2510 St. Paul St.
Baltimore, MD 21218
Phone: 410-338-2512
Fax: 410-338-2751
info@dtinational.org
www.dtinational.org

DTI offers comprehensive services to individuals and organizations working in community development.

International Downtown Association (IDA)

910 17th St. NW
Suite 210
Washington, DC 20006-2603
Phone: 202-293-4505
Fax: 202-293-4509
www.ida-downtown.org

IDA provides guidance in creating healthy and dynamic centers that anchor the well-being of towns, cities, and regions throughout the world.

International Economic Development Council (IEDC)

734 15th St. NW
Suite 900
Washington, DC 20005
Phone: 202-223-7800
Fax: 202-223-4745
www.iedconline.org/aboutus_top.html

IEDC's mission is to advance the current and future needs of both its members and the profession, providing one source for information and professional development.

National Association of Development Organizations (NADO)

400 N Capitol St. NW
Suite 390
Washington, DC 20001
Phone: 202-624-7806
Fax: 202-624-8813
info@nado.org
www.nado.org

NADO provides training, information, and representation for regional development organizations in small metropolitan areas and rural America.

Appendix E: Professional Organizations and Resources for Site Selection (cont.)

Community Planning and Development (cont.)

National Charrette Institute (NCI)

321 SW 4th St.
Suite 800
Portland, OR 97204
Phone: 503-228-9240
Fax: 503-228-2010
info@charretteinstitute.org
www.charretteinstitute.org

NCI helps communities achieve healthy transformation and realize buildable plans through a collaborative planning process.

National Neighborhood Coalition (NNC)

1030 15th St. NW
Suite 325
Washington, DC 20005
Phone: 202-408-8553
Fax: 202-408-8551
nncnnc@erols.com
www.neighborhoodcoalition.org

NNC serves as a link to Washington for neighborhood and community-based organizations and as a networking resource for representatives of regional and national organizations involved in community development and other neighborhood issues.

Smart Growth America

1200 18th St. NW
Suite 801
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: 202-207-3350
Fax: 202-207-3349
sga@smartgrowthamerica.org
www.smartgrowthamerica.org

Smart Growth America is a nationwide coalition that promotes the protection of farmland and open space, revitalization of neighborhoods, affordable housing, and more transportation choices.

Surface Transportation Policy Project

1100 17th St. NW
10th Floor
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: 202-466-2636
Fax: 202-466-2247
stpp@transact.org
www.transact.org

The goal of the Surface Transportation Policy Project is to ensure that transportation policy and investments help conserve energy, protect environmental and aesthetic quality, strengthen the economy, promote social equity, and make communities more livable.

Trust for Public Land (TPL)

116 New Montgomery St.
4th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94105
Phone: 415-495-4014
Fax: 415-495-4103
www.tpl.org

TPL's mission is to conserve and protect land for human enjoyment and to improve the health and quality of life of American communities.

U.S. Conference of Mayors

1620 I St. NW
Washington, DC 20006
Phone: 202-293-7330
Fax: 202-293-2352
info@usmayors.org
www.usmayors.org/uscm/home.asp

U.S. Conference of Mayors is the official nonpartisan organization of cities with populations of 30,000 or more. Primary roles are to promote the development of effective national urban/suburban policy, strengthen federal-city relationships, ensure that federal policy meets urban needs, provide mayors with leadership and management tools, and create a forum in which mayors can share ideas and information.

Appendix E: Professional Organizations and Resources for Site Selection (cont.)

Community Planning and Development (cont.)

U.S. Department of Energy's Smart Communities Network

Smart Communities Network
www.sustainable.doe.gov

The Smart Communities Network provides a menu of information and services on how communities can adopt sustainable development as a strategy for well-being.

Design, Planning, and Engineering Professionals

American Institute of Architects (AIA)

1735 New York Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20006
Phone: 800-AIA-3837
Fax: 202-626-7547
infocentral@aia.org
www.aia.org

AIA advances the value of architects and architecture through AIA member resources and as the collective voice of the profession.

American Planning Association (APA)

1776 Massachusetts Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20036-1904
Phone: 202-872-0611
Fax: 202-872-0643
www.planning.org/aicp/index.htm

APA is a public interest and research organization committed to urban, suburban, regional, and rural planning.

American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE)

1801 Alexander Bell Dr.
Reston, VA 20191
(800) 548-2723
www.asce.org

ASCE's vision is to position engineers as global leaders building a better quality of life.

American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA)

636 I St. NW
Washington, DC 20001-3736
Phone: 202-898-2444
Fax: 202-898-1185
www.asla.org

ASLA strives to meet the needs and interests of the nation's landscape architects and the public they serve.

Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE)

1099 14th St. NW
Suite 300 W
Washington, DC 20005-3438
Phone: 202-289-0222
Fax: 202-289-7722
ite_staff@ite.org
www.ite.org

ITE members include traffic engineers, transportation planners, and other professionals involved with surface transportation systems worldwide.

Environmental Management

Air & Waste Management Association (A&WMA)

One Gateway Center
420 Fort Duquesne Blvd.
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
Phone: 412-232-3444
Fax: 412-232-3450
info@awma.org
www.awma.org

A&WMA provides training, information, and networking opportunities to environmental professionals.

Appendix E: Professional Organizations and Resources for Site Selection (cont.)

Environmental Management (cont.)

Center for Public Environmental Oversight (CPEO)

278-A Hope St.
Mountain View, CA 94041
Phone: 650-961-8918 or 650-969-1545
Fax: 650-961-8918
lsiegel@cpeo.org
www.cpeo.org

CPEO promotes and facilitates public participation in the oversight of environmental activities at federal facilities, private Superfund sites, and brownfields.

Environmental Council of the States (ECOS)

444 N Capitol St. NW
Suite 445
Washington, DC 20001
Phone: 202-624-3660
Fax: 202-624-3666
ecos@sso.org
www.sso.org/ecos

ECOS is the national nonprofit, nonpartisan association of state and territorial environmental commissioners.

Environmental Law Institute (ELI)

1616 P St. NW
Suite 200
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: 202-939-3800
Fax: 202-939-3868
law@eli.org
www.eli.org

ELI works with local and regional partners to strengthen environmental laws; develop new theories and practical approaches to ensure their effectiveness; and improve the capacity of citizens and governments to use the law to protect the environment.

**Global Development Research Center—
Urban Environmental Management**

www.gdrc.org/uem

The Global Development Research Center is a virtual organization that brings together research and development at the global level; education and training at the regional level; and policy and program development at the local level.

National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO)

1100 17th St. NW
2nd Floor
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: 202-783-5550
Fax: 202-783-1583
www.naccho.org

NACCHO provides education, information, research, and technical assistance to local health departments and facilitates partnerships among local, state, and federal agencies to promote and strengthen public health.

National Association of Local Government Environmental Professionals (NALGEP)

1350 New York Ave. NW
Suite 1100
Washington, DC 20005
Phone: 202-638-6254
Fax: 202-393-2866
nalgep@spiegelmc.com
www.nalgep.org

NALGEP brings together local environmental officials to network and share information on local and national environmental issues.

Appendix E: Professional Organizations and Resources for Site Selection (cont.)

Environmental Management (cont.)

U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC)/LEED

1015 18th St. NW
Suite 805
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: 202-82-USGBC or 202-828-7422
Fax: 202-828-5110
info@usgbc.org
www.usgbc.org

USGBC is a coalition of leaders from across the building industry working to promote buildings that are environmentally responsible, profitable, and healthy places to live and work. USGBC is the primary resource for the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) rating system for “green” buildings.

Historic Preservation

National Main Street Center of the National Trust for Historic Preservation

1785 Massachusetts Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: 202-588-6219
Fax: 202-588-6050
mainst@nthp.org
www.mainstreet.org

The National Main Street Center works with communities across the nation to revitalize their historic or traditional commercial areas.

National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP)

1785 Massachusetts Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: 202-588-6000
Fax: 202-588-6038
www.nationaltrust.org

NTHP is the leader of the vigorous preservation movement that is saving the best of our past for the future.

Material Standards

American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM)

100 Barr Harbor Dr.
West Conshohocken, PA 19428-2959
Phone: 610-832-9585
Fax: 610-832-9555
www.astm.org

ASTM develops and provides voluntary consensus standards for materials and related technical information and services.

Real Estate

Appraisal Institute (AI)

550 W Van Buren St.
Suite 1000
Chicago IL 60607
Phone: 312-335-4100
Fax: 312-335-4400
www.appraisalinstitute.org

AI is a worldwide organization dedicated to real estate appraisal education, publications, and advocacy.

Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA) International

1201 New York Ave. NW
Suite 300
Washington, DC 20005
Phone: 202-408-2662
Fax: 202-371-0181
www.boma.org

BOMA provides information to and a network forum for industry professionals.

Appendix E: Professional Organizations and Resources for Site Selection (cont.)

Real Estate (cont.)

CoreNet Global

440 Columbia Dr.
Suite 100
West Palm Beach, FL 33409
Phone: 800-726-8111
Fax: 561-697-4853
www.corenetglobal.org

CoreNet Global serves a global network of corporate real estate and related professionals who create strategic value for their enterprises. In 2001, the Boards of Directors of NACORE and IDRC voted to approve a merger, forming CoreNet Global.

International Facility Management Association (IFMA)

1 E Greenway Plaza
Suite 1100
Houston, TX 77046-0194
Phone: 713-623-4362
Fax: 713-623-6124
ifmahq@ifma.org
www.ifma.org

IFMA is a professional association for facility managers, supporting the largest community of facility management professionals in the industry.

International Right of Way Association (IRWA)

Pacifica Harbor Business Center
19750 S Vermont Ave.
Suite 220
Torrance, CA 90502-1144
Phone: 310-538-0233
Fax: 310-538-1471
info@irwaonline.org
www.irwaonline.org

IRWA is dedicated to the advancement of right-of-way and real property acquisition work as a fully recognized profession.

International Society of Facilities Executives (ISFE)

200 Corporate Pl.
Suite 2B
Peabody, MA 01960-3840
Phone: 978-536-0108
Fax: 978-536-0199
isfe@isfe.org
www.isfe.org

ISFE's mission is to provide a forum to exchange facility management experience and knowledge among senior facilities managers worldwide.

National Association of Industrial and Office Properties (NAIOP)

2201 Cooperative Way
3rd Floor
Herndon, VA 20171-3034
Phone: 703-904-7100
Fax: 703-904-7942
www.naiop.org

NAIOP represents the interests of developers and owners of industrial, office, and related commercial real estate throughout North America and promotes effective public policy to create, protect, and enhance property values.

Online Site Magazines

Site Selection Online
www.siteselection.com

Web site directs users to a number of related Web sites that can assist in the site selection process.

Urban Land Institute (ULI)

1025 Thomas Jefferson St. NW
Suite 500 W
Washington, DC 20007
Phone: 202-624-7000 or 1-800-321-5011
Fax: 202-624-7140
www.uli.org

ULI's mission is to provide responsible leadership in the use of land to enhance the total environment.

Acknowledgements

This Guide endeavors to capture the expertise of the GSAs Site Knowledge Bank and impart it to others involved in site selection. Our Site Selection Task Force set the direction for this effort; our consultants, Gensler and Eckland Consultants, organized the Task Force members' knowledge, experience, and process into an intelligible document.

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Gianne Conard, AIA
Site Selection Task Force Chairman

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