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Conducting Research on Federal Real Property: A Guide to Selected Resources

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SUMMARY

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Conducting Research on Federal Real Property: A Guide to Selected Resources

This report is designed to introduce congressional staff to selected sources published by the General Services Administration (GSA) that may be useful in conducting research on federal real property—land, buildings, and structures owned, operated, or leased by the federal government—in a particular geographic area. Sources include the Federal Real Property Profile Data set for civilian and noncivilian agencies, the Federal Real Property Map, GSA Lease Inventory, Federal Real Property Summary Reports, Inventory of Leased and Owned Properties, and several real property disposal resources.

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Federal Real Property Profile Public Data Set

Federal real property consists of land, buildings, and structures owned, operated, or leased by the federal government. Established by the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, the General Services Administration (GSA) provides real property services—including the acquisition, operation, and disposal of buildings and land—to any federal agency that lacks the authority to do so itself.[1] As part of the agency's real property asset management program, GSA aggregates data in a number of resources, including the Federal Real Property Profile, to help agencies better understand the federal inventory.

In Executive Order No. 13327 (effective February 6, 2004), GSA was first directed "to establish and maintain a single, comprehensive, and descriptive database of all real property under the custody and control of all executive branch agencies, except when otherwise required for reasons of national security." However, under this order the agency was not required to make the data available to the public.[2]

In December 2016, Congress passed the Federal Assets Sale and Transfer Act of 2016 (FASTA), requiring the General Services Administration to "(1) publish a database of all federal real property under the custody and control of all executive agencies, other than federal real property excluded for reasons of national security, and (2) make such database available to other federal agencies and accessible by the public at no cost through GSA's website."[3]

In December 2017, GSA released the first Federal Real Property Profile (FRPP) public data set, which was an extract of the larger FRPP Management System (FRPP MS) data set for FY2016. FRPP data are split into two separate public data sets: civilian agencies and Department of Defense.

Federal Real Property Profile Data for Civilian Agencies

https://www.gsa.gov/policy-regulations/policy/real-property-policy/asset-management/federal-real-property-profile-frpp/federal-real-property-public-data-set

Each year, federal agencies submit descriptive information on the nature, extent, and use of their real property assets to GSA to be included in the FRPP MS database. The Federal Real Property Council (FRPC)[4] defines the data elements and technical requirements for data submission and provides any updates in the FRPC Guidance for Real Property Inventory, also known as the FRPP data dictionary, available at https://www.gsa.gov/policy-regulations/policy/real-property-policy/asset-management/federal-real-property-council-frpc/frpc-guidance-library. Criteria for data submission in the fiscal year of the data set impact the type of information that may be extracted from the data set.

[1] P.L. 81-152.

[2] Executive Order 13327, "Federal Real Property Asset Management," 69 *Federal Register* 5897, February 4, 2004, https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2004/02/06/04-2773/federal-real-property-asset-management.

[3] P.L. 114-287, §21.

[4] The FRPC was established by Executive Order 13327 and later enacted into law by the Federal Real Property Management Reform Act (P.L. 114-318) during the 114th Congress. The council is chaired by the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB's) Deputy Director for Management, and comprised of Senior Real Property Officers, the Controller of OMB, the Administrator of General Services, and any additional officials or employees designated by the chair.

Following the FRPC guidance, reporting agencies select and submit data to the FRPP MS—which also means selecting assets to be excluded from the public data set. As such, the public data set is not as complete as the FRPP MS data set. For example, of the 398,000 assets included in the FRPP MS database, 305,000 are presented in the public data set for FY2018. The most recent data available to the public are presented in an Excel spreadsheet available for download at the website listed above, along with other archived data sets.

Potential Uses of Data

The FRPP public data set is the best source for identifying the federal real property owned or leased by a specific agency or utilized for a specific purpose within a geographic area. The data include information on reporting agency, real property type (e.g., building, land, or structure), real property use (e.g., office, park, or monument/memorial), legal interest indicator (e.g., leased, owned, or museum trust), addresses, congressional district, and utilization, among other data points. For a full list of data covered in the spreadsheets and definitions for these categories, see the FRPP Data Dictionaries available at the Federal Real Property Council Library website linked above.

The data in the spreadsheets can be sorted and filtered by column to extract various information of interest to Congress. For example, the Excel columns can be sorted to extract data on buildings, structures, or land that the federal government owns or leases in a specific district, county, or state, or the columns can be filtered to view just the properties owned by a specific federal agency.

Data Limitations and Caveats

In February 2020, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) published a study of the FRPP public data set titled *Federal Real Property: GSA Should Improve Accuracy, Completeness, and Usefulness of Public Data*.[5]

The GAO study highlighted several limitations of the data, including the following:

- The reported data contain incomplete or inaccurate data, such as incomplete or incorrectly formatted street addresses.
- GSA and individual reporting agencies withheld information that reduces the completeness of the public data, such as the bureau within an agency that reports the data for a property, the entity that uses the asset, and the number of federal employees working at each property.[6]
- Agencies withheld publicly available information on some listed assets, and entirely withheld other assets from the database, while choosing to include similar assets in an inconsistent manner. For example, the FCC withheld all of its real property assets despite listing the locations and functions of the FCC offices on the agency's own public website.[7]

[5] Government Accountability Office (GAO), *Federal Real Property: GSA Should Improve, Accuracy, Completeness, and Usefulness of Public Data*, Report to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, House of Representatives, GAO-20-135, February 2020, https://www.gao.gov/assets/710/704358.pdf (hereinafter GAO-20-135, *Federal Real Property*, February 2020).

[6] GAO-20-135, *Federal Real Property*, February 2020, Appendix I.

[7] GAO-20-135, *Federal Real Property*, February 2020, pp. 18-22.

Not all categories of data are reported for each property within the spreadsheets. For example, some properties do not include district or utilization information. Also, the latest real property data are from FY2018; the status of some properties listed may have changed.

According to the Federal Real Property Council's 2020 Guidance for Real Property Inventory Reporting, agencies are also not required to report the following real property data:

- Land easements or rights-of-way held by the federal government.
- Public domain land (including lands withdrawn for military purposes) or land reserved or dedicated for national forest, national park, or national wildlife refuge purposes, except for improvements on those lands.
- Land held in trust or restricted-fee status for individual Native Americans or Native American tribes.
- Land, and interests in land, that are withheld from the database by agency heads for reasons of national security, foreign policy, or public safety.
- Real property data exempt from public disclosure under FASTA in cases when the data are already exempt under section 552(b) of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) (5 U.S.C. §552(b)).[8]

Department of Defense and Other Installations

https://catalog.data.gov/dataset/fy-2017-federal-real-property-profile-data-for-department-of-defense

The Department of Defense (DOD) Real Property Profile data are split into five spreadsheets organized by military branch, including Air Force, Army, Navy, Corps of Engineers, and Department of Defense Washington Headquarters Service. Because of FASTA's exclusion of data on properties and interests in properties for reasons of national security, foreign policy, or public safety, fewer DOD properties are included in the public data set. Those that are included tend to be more prominent properties such as bases, airports, naval shipyards, training centers, or proving grounds. Additionally, the DOD data spreadsheets include fewer data categories than provided for the civilian agencies. For example, the military branch data include only installation name; number of buildings, structures, or land owned/leased at each installation; total square feet; and city/state where the installation is located.

https://catalog.data.gov/dataset/federal-real-property-profile-frpp-summary-data-by-installation-name

For FY2020, GSA released a summary data set providing limited details on specified assets by "installation name." The data set includes assets reported by DOD, military branches, and other executive branch agencies that the agencies deemed could not be made public at a detailed level. As with the last DOD real property data set published for FY2017, the FY2020 data include fewer data categories than provided for the civilian agencies in the same fiscal year.

[8] Federal Real Property Council, *2020 Guidance for Real Property Inventory Reporting, Version 2*, August 17, 2020, pp. 8, 40-41, https://www.gsa.gov/cdnstatic/FY_2020_FRPP_DATA_DICTIONARY_v2_final2.pdf. See also Section 2 of Executive Order 13327, "Federal Real Property Asset Management," 69 *Federal Register* 5897; and §3(5)(B) of FASTA (P.L. 114-287).

Federal Real Property Map

https://frppmap.gsa.gov/frppmap/

In July 2018, GSA unveiled a GIS-enabled map compiled from the data contained in the FRPP public data set for civilian agencies that allows users to view federal real property in an interactive visual tool. Users can conduct a spatial query (select an area using a shape tool) or enter address information into a search tool to view the federal real property located in the geographic area specified.

According to GSA's 2019 user guide for the FRPP Map, the map also contains eight predefined views that allow users to filter results, including the following:

- Disposed View: real property assets disposed during FY2017.
- Excess View: real property declared excess at the end of FY2017.
- Master View: all worldwide real property assets included in the FRPP public data set.
- Status View: real property assets by status categories.
- Sustainability View: view real property assets by whether or not they have been evaluated and/or meet criteria for a sustainable federal building.
- U.S. Assets View: real property assets located in the United States.
- Utilization View: real property assets by utilization categories.
- Assets by Congressional District: heat map view of real property assets by number of assets in each congressional district.[9]

Users may also filter results from the predefined views above by additional query criteria, including reporting agency, real property type, and real property use, among other criteria.

In addition to a visual representation of data on a map, users can view results of searches in an attribute table that provides similar data to the FRPP public data set. Results can be downloaded from the attribute table into a comma-separated values (CSV) file, but downloads are limited to 2,000 results at a time. For instructions on using the map's search capabilities, consult GSA's *Federal Real Property Profile Map User Guide* (January 2019), available at https://www.gsa.gov/cdnstatic/FRPP%20Map%20User%20Guide%20%20January%202019.pdf.

Data Limitations

Because the data for the map are extracted from the FRPP public data set, the same data limitations previously discussed apply. In the 2020 study of the FRPP public data set, GAO also found that of the 305,000 assets listed in the public data, approximately 214,000 had some street address information, and 70,000 of those entries fully met GSA's standard for complete and correctly formatted address information. Additionally, GAO noted issues with the accuracy of geo-coordinates (latitude and longitude) provided for some assets.[10] As such, results for a specific geographic area in the FRPP public data set Excel spreadsheet filtered by city, state, or

[9] General Services Administration, Office of Government-wide Policy, *Federal Real Property Profile Map User Guide*, January 2019, pp. 3-4, https://www.gsa.gov/cdnstatic/FRPP%20Map%20User%20Guide%20%20January%202019.pdf.

[10] Government Accountability Office, *Federal Real Property: GSA Should Improve Accuracy, Completeness, and Usefulness of Public Data*, Report to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, House of Representatives, February 2020, pp. 7-11, https://www.gao.gov/assets/710/704358.pdf.

congressional district may not always match the results filtered for the same geographic area in the FRPP map. Also, the FRPP map is slow to load and allows users to download 2,000 results from the attributes table at a time; therefore it may be best used for searching/querying smaller data sets and geographic areas.

Inventory of Owned and Leased Properties

https://www.gsa.gov/tools-overview/buildings-real-estate-etools/inventory-of-gsa-owned-and-leased-properties

GSA publishes and regularly updates an Inventory of Owned and Leased Properties (IOLP) that is divided into two categories: owned buildings and leases.

The Owned and Leased Data Sets both include the following data for each listed property:

- Location code, or GSA's alphanumeric identifier for the building.
- A building's status as Federally Owned (F) or Leased (L).
- GSA-assigned region for building location.
- Building address.
- Map coordinates of the building.
- Total rentable square feet in building.
- Square feet of vacant space in building.
- Construction date of building.
- Congressional district where building is located, Senator/Representative of the congressional district, and their web address.

Also, the Leased Data set includes the following:

- GSA's alphanumeric identifier for the lease.
- Lease effective date.
- Lease expiration date.

The inventory provides the most up-to-date list of federally owned or leased real property. It does not include as much detail as the FRPP public data, such as reporting agency, real property type, real property use, and utilization. The latest inventory can be accessed and downloaded at https://catalog.data.gov/dataset/inventory-of-owned-and-leased-properties-iolp.

Inventory of Owned and Leased Properties Map

https://www.iolp.gsa.gov/iolp/

GSA maintains an interactive map representing the data in the Inventory of Owned and Leased Properties, which can be accessed at the web address above. The map provides a visual representation of the extent of federal real property ownership and leases in a specific geographic area.

The IOLP map includes four predefined searches, which can be selected from drop-down menus on the map web page, including the following:

- Property within a Senator's or Representative's jurisdiction (GSA Owned or Leased).

- Property by state or congressional district (GSA Owned or Leased).
- Lease property search (GSA Leased Only).
- Owned property search (GSA Owned Only).

General Services Administration Lease Inventory

https://www.gsa.gov/real-estate/real-estate-services/leasing-policy-procedures/lease-inventory.

GSA's lease inventory includes information such as lease number, address, latest action affecting term of lease (e.g., renewal, new, extension), percentage occupied, annual rent, lessor, and percentage of space occupied by office, warehouse, or special functions. After the 15th of each month, GSA posts an updated listing of the inventory to the web page linked above.

Although the inventory is updated more frequently than the FRPP public data and includes lease-specific information not contained in the FRPP, the lease inventory does not include information on the leasing agency, property use, property type, or congressional district.

Federal Real Property Summary Reports

https://www.gsa.gov/policy-regulations/policy/real-property-policy/data-collection-and-reports/frpp-summary-report-library

Prior to the passage of FASTA in 2016 and the subsequent release of the FRPP public data set, the primary source of real property data available to Congress and the public was the Federal Real Property Report (FRPR), which provides aggregate data on executive branch agency portfolios. The report, which is published by the FRPC, draws on information stored in GSA's FRPP database. The council establishes data definitions and determines what data to collect and report, while GSA collects and maintains the data.[11]

GSA maintains a library of current and archived FRPP Summary Reports, at the website listed above. The Summary Reports include a data set in the form of an Excel spreadsheet and a separate Summary of Findings drawn from data submitted by agencies as of September 30 of each fiscal year. The open data set includes data from the past fiscal year, such as statistics on Buildings Real Property Use by Square Footage and Costs, Utilization of Buildings, Land Acreage and Costs by Agency, Land Dispositions by Method, Number of Structures and Costs by Agency, Total Land Acreage by State, and other statistics. [12] Some spreadsheets also include comparison data from the past three fiscal years. Most of the data is provided for Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Act Agencies, with a selection of data tables for Non-CFO Agencies, such as "Cost per Square Feet of Buildings for Non-CFO Act Agencies."

The Summary of Findings provides high-level summaries of data such as national totals of buildings, structures, and land owned or leased by the federal government, as well as analytical

[11] See "Federal Real Property Council (FRPC)," General Services Administration, https://www.gsa.gov/policy-regulations/policy/real-property-policy/asset-management/federal-real-property-council-frpc.

[12] According to the *FY2020 Federal Real Property Profile Summary Data Set Executive Summary*, "GSA is now publishing the FRPP Summary Data Set (formerly called the Open Data Set) for FY 2020. This data set provides a high level summary of the real property inventory of the Federal Government in the U.S. and U.S. territories for Chief Financial Officers (CFO) Act agencies at the end of FY 2020." See GSA, *FY2020 Federal Real Property Profile Summary Data Set Executive Summary*, https://www.gsa.gov/policy-regulations/policy/real-property-policy/data-collection-and-reports/frpp-summary-report-library.

comparisons of data from year to year, such as the percentage change in buildings owned by the federal government or the net proceeds from disposal of real property.

Overall, the data from GSA's FRPP Summary Reports could be useful in comparing national real property data against data for a specific geographic region or agency. Because the summary reports draw data from the FRPP database, the same limitations discussed in the section on the FRPP public data set apply to the summary reports.

Real Property Disposal

https://disposal.gsa.gov/s/propertydislibrary

GSA's Real Property Utilization and Disposal Library contains resources on the disposal process; guides for potential federal, state, and local customers; and links to relevant laws, regulations, and authorities. The following resources are maintained by GSA to track excess properties available for disposal.

Available Excess Properties Search Tool

https://disposal.gsa.gov/s/

GSA's Real Property Utilization and Disposal Home Page includes a map of excess properties for sale, a sales list of these properties, and a list of surplus notices. Click on an individual property listing to view information on the property type, disposal method, GSA control number, property contact, and other information. GSA also maintains a Property Search Tool that allows users to search for excess properties by state and property type.

Real Property Utilization and Disposal Reports

https://disposal.gsa.gov/s/propertydislibrary

The GSA Real Property Utilization and Disposal Library contains an overview report of real property utilization and disposal for the most recent fiscal year. The reports provide a high-level summary of GSA's Office of Real Property Utilization and Disposal (RPU&D) activities for the fiscal year on number of disposals by customer, value of proceeds by customer, number of federal transfers, public benefit conveyances, total sales, comparison data for the previous five years, and other aggregate data.

Selected CRS Reports

Additional information on GSA's real property asset management is provided in the following CRS Reports:

CRS Report R46594, *Federal Real Property Data: Limitations and Implications for Oversight*, by Garrett Hatch and Carol Wilson

CRS Report R44286, *Federal Real Property Data: Limitations and Implications for Oversight*, by Garrett Hatch

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