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**Highlights**

Highlights of [GAO-03-747](#), a report to congressional requesters

## Why GAO Did This Study

The federal government has many vacant and underutilized properties that are no longer needed. Retaining unneeded real properties presents federal agencies with significant potential risks for (1) lost dollars because such properties are costly to maintain; and (2) lost opportunities because the properties could be put to more cost-beneficial uses, exchanged for other needed property, or sold to generate revenue for the government.

The General Services Administration (GSA), the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) hold a significant number of real property assets. GAO was asked to provide information on how these agencies identify vacant and underutilized real properties and the numbers, types, and locations of these properties.

## FEDERAL REAL PROPERTY

# Vacant and Underutilized Properties at GSA, VA, and USPS

## What GAO Found

- GSA, VA, and USPS primarily rely on field office officials to identify vacant and underutilized properties. These officials make on-site property visits, communicate with tenant agencies about lease renewals, and examine agency program requirements that will affect agencies' real property needs. These three agencies also have ongoing nationwide initiatives to realign their real property portfolios. GSA officials are reviewing all of its properties to identify and remove all assets from its real property inventory that are not financially self-sustaining or for which there is not a substantial, long-term federal purpose. VA officials are in the process of identifying unneeded real property assets to reduce VA's large inventory of vacant and underutilized buildings. USPS officials are reviewing and modifying its postal real property infrastructure so that USPS can enhance customer service and control costs through the closing and consolidation of unneeded facilities, such as some post offices.
- As of October 1, 2002, these agencies reported a total of 927 vacant and underutilized real properties—including facilities and land—located throughout the United States and Puerto Rico in 294 cities. VA reported the most properties—577; GSA reported 236 properties, and USPS reported 114 properties. Most of these properties—807 of 927—were facilities that represented about 32.1 million square feet and ranged from office buildings to hospitals to post offices. Although VA reported the highest number of facilities, GSA facilities made up more than half of this square footage. The remaining 120 properties were vacant lands reported only by VA and USPS, most of which were 10 acres or less.
- GSA said that 236 properties is an overstatement because 43 properties are committed to future use, and 37 small properties support occupiable space. GAO did not change GSA's total number of properties because they were vacant or underutilized as of October 1, 2002. However, GAO reflected GSA's concern in the text and in the list of GSA's properties. VA and USPS generally agreed with the information in this report.

## Examples of Vacant GSA, VA, and USPS Facilities



Sources (from left to right): Ernst & Young LLP, VA, and USPS.  
 From left to right: L. Mendel Rivers Building, Charleston, SC; former Main VA Hospital Building, Milwaukee, WI; former Main Post Office, Chicago, IL.

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-747](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-747).

To view the full report, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Mark L. Goldstein at (202) 512-2834 or [goldsteinm@gao.gov](mailto:goldsteinm@gao.gov).