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# Implementing Instructions - Sustainable Locations for Federal Facilities

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## Background

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On October 5, 2009, President Obama signed Executive Order (E.O.) 13514, “Federal Leadership in Environmental, Energy and Economic Performance.” The E.O. states that “It is the policy of the United States that Federal agencies shall...design, construct, maintain, and operate high performance sustainable buildings ***in sustainable locations, and strengthen the vitality and livability of the communities in which Federal facilities are located.***”

The Executive Order directs agencies to “advance regional and local integrated planning by...participating in regional transportation planning and recognizing existing community transportation infrastructure; ...ensuring that planning for new Federal facilities or new leases includes consideration of sites that are pedestrian friendly, near existing employment centers, and accessible to public transit, and emphasizes existing central cities and (rural) town centers (Section 2(f)).”

Section 5(b) of the E.O. specifies that the Chair of the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) shall issue instructions to implement the order. The purpose of this document is to provide implementing instructions to be used by Federal agencies in planning sustainable Federal facility locations. Section 10 of E.O. 13514 directs the Department of Transportation, in partnership with the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and in coordination with the General Services Administration and the Departments of Defense and Homeland Security, to develop recommendations for identifying sustainable locations for Federal facilities.

The Sustainable Locations Interagency Working Group worked with stakeholders from Federal, state and local government sectors to develop recommendations to be applied to Federal facility and workplace location decisions. The Working Group provided the resulting recommendations to CEQ and these Implementing Instructions for Sustainable Locations for Federal Facilities (Instructions) reflect those recommendations.

## Applicability and Business Context

The Federal Government controls more than 2.7 billion square feet of work space in more than 316,000 buildings in the United States.<sup>1</sup> Each year, the government makes a myriad of decisions regarding where to build new facilities, consolidate office space or relocate operations.

Agencies must make responsible choices in the siting of Federal facilities, both owned and leased, striking the appropriate balance among cost, security and sustainability, while meeting the mission need and ensuring competition. It is important that agency policies provide clear

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<sup>1</sup> Federal Real Property Council’s FY2008 Federal Real Property Report. The largest Federal holders of real property, based on building square footage, are the Department of Defense (70%), the U.S. General Services Administration (15%), Department of Veterans Affairs (6%), and the Department of the Interior (4%). Figures do not include U.S. Postal Service facilities.

guidance for achieving the balance appropriate to the agency for among these considerations. The optimal Federal location decision is the choice that meets Federal agency mission needs, at the appropriate cost, achieving the necessary level of security, while leveraging Federal development in support of other Federal and local goals. These Instructions are meant to improve Federal agency sustainability performance by ensuring effectively balanced decisions on new facility locations and more effective space utilization in both new and existing locations.

Federal agency location decisions represent significant opportunities to achieve E.O. 13514 policy goals. Federal, state, and local governments invest significant resources in promoting economic development, increasing availability of affordable housing, providing transportation choices, and ensuring environmental stewardship. Traffic congestion, economic opportunity, efficient use of infrastructure, and facility security all contribute to the many concerns shared by both public entities and the public on facility location decisions.

Agencies must evaluate the full range of impacts from Federal location decisions and should identify cost-effective strategies to optimize sustainable space utilization. Agencies, at their discretion, may use a variety of means to integrate appropriate consideration into agency business practices, including establishing relevant requirements or selection factors.

These Instructions apply to all Federal agencies and activities that are subject to E.O. 13514. They are applicable to agencies acquiring or developing owned or leased space directly, either for their own or another Federal agency's use, as well as agencies defining or requesting space needs that will be met by others. Although these instructions pertain to factors inherent in the location choice for a Federal facility, they are to be used in conjunction with other directives that promote sustainable site development of the chosen location.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Other relevant instructions include guidance on climate change adaptation planning, storm water management, sustainable landscaping, water efficiency etc. These may be found at [www.FedCenter.gov](http://www.FedCenter.gov).

## Implementing Instructions for Sustainable Federal Location Decisions

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The head of each agency shall:

**Incorporate Principles for Sustainable Federal Location Decisions into applicable agency business practices and agency Strategic Sustainability Performance Plans (SSPP).**

*Note: For purposes of the below, a reporting outline will be provided in the next SSPP template to assist agencies in completing submission:*

- A.** Each Federal agency's SSPP submission to the Chair of CEQ by June 2012 shall include and provide evidence of the following business practices:
  - i. Integration of the *Principles for Sustainable Federal Location Decisions* into agency site selection and lease procurement procedures.
  - ii. Integration of the *Principles* into written agency procedures for defining their facility requirements and formulation of related funding requests.
- B.** Each SSPP shall include a brief agency report-out on the following facility activities and opportunities to incorporate the *Principles*:
  - i. **Agency Experience.** Identify significant agency facility or facilities areas (multiple facilities in adjacent proximity), such as moves, expansions, or consolidations, that occurred at a minimum 6 months prior to June 2012, and if applicable, assess successes, challenges, and impacts to workplace requirements if the *Principles* were incorporated into agency business practices.
  - ii. **Near-term Planning.** Identify significant agency facility or facilities areas changes that are planned or anticipated to be implemented in the **current and following fiscal year** (i.e., FY 2012-13) where the *Principles* could be applied. The agency shall report how the *Principles* will be applied, if the agency expects any challenges to doing so and, if so, how the agency intends to address those challenges. Moreover, agencies shall report how their Scope 3 employee commuting emissions data under Section 9 of E.O. 13514, in alignment with the *Principles*, will be applied to the identified changes.
  - iii. **Medium-Term Planning.** Identify significant agency facility or facilities areas changes that are anticipated to occur in the **next 2 to 4 years** (i.e., FY 2014 – FY 2016).

## Principles for Sustainable Federal Locations

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In order to meet their responsibilities under E.O. 13514, each agency is instructed to develop internal policies and procedures that align their facility decision-making with these principles:

- I. **Advance Local and Regional Planning Goals.** As set forth in section 2(f)(i) of E.O. 13514, agencies should advance regional and local integrated planning by participating in regional transportation planning and recognizing existing community transportation and other infrastructure. Section 2(f)(iii) requires that agencies ensure that “planning for new Federal facilities or new leases includes consideration of sites that are pedestrian friendly, near existing employment centers, and accessible to public transit, and emphasizes existing central cities and, in rural communities, existing or planned town centers.”
  - a. **Consider sustainable locations from a regional perspective, consulting with local officials and considering their recommendations.** Prior to and during the space decision process, Federal agencies should, as appropriate, engage planning officials at the state, metropolitan, or municipal level to identify ways proposed agency actions can support community sustainability and potentially aligning Federal actions with local and regional long range plans and objectives. This coordination will help ensure that new Federal locations do not disproportionately impact the transportation infrastructure in a negative way or disrupt traffic patterns, while also supporting local goals and growth patterns.
  - b. **Consider recommendations of local officials in light of Federal sustainability goals.** In addition to the need for Federal agencies to consider local recommendations based on a variety of mission, cost, and other factors, agencies should consider such recommendations in light of E.O. 13514’s Federal sustainability and economic development goals.
- II. **Seek Location-Efficient Sites.** Agencies should take specific actions to advance these principles:
  - a. **Prioritize central business districts and rural town centers.** Federal agencies should work to advance local and regional planning goals prioritizing facility locations in central cities and rural town centers<sup>3</sup>. E.O. 12072 directs agencies to give “first consideration” to locating in central business areas, as defined by local officials. Similarly, E.O. 13514 directs agencies to emphasize such areas in central cities and in rural town centers, to “strengthen the vitality and livability of the communities in which Federal facilities are located.” Co-location and mixed-use siting of Federal facilities in central business districts and

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<sup>3</sup> E.O. 13514, Section 2(f) calls for agencies to “emphasize” these locations; Section 10 calls for agencies to “prioritize” these locations.

suburban/rural town centers can result in multiple sustainability benefits for the community.

- b. Prioritize locations that promote transportation choice.** Locations that provide robust transportation options promote ease of access for a variety of workers and visitors; help to reduce road congestion and GHG emissions associated with vehicle miles traveled (VMT); and leverage existing transportation infrastructure investment. Agency location decisions should take into consideration the promotion of a variety of transportation choices with a focus on encouraging public transportation and transit oriented development (TOD). Agencies may choose to integrate this consideration into their business practices through a variety of appropriate means. At the agency's discretion, appropriate means may include establishment of an area of consideration, application of performance criteria, or use of selection factors that would give favorable consideration to the relative ability of a location to support transportation choice.
- c. Promote walkable and bikeable sites.** Walkable and bikeable sites are surrounded by a variety of businesses, services, and land uses in close proximity to one another, where they can be easily reached on foot and by bicycle. Locating workplaces in walkable and bikeable areas enables employees to accomplish routine tasks near their place of employment without getting in their cars, reducing driving emissions and congestion during the workday and supporting employee wellness by encouraging physical activity. Agency location decisions should take into consideration the relative walkability and bikeability of each location.
- d. Locate in areas that are accessible to a diverse range of employees and visitors.** Agencies should encourage through the planning process for Federal facilities locations that promote accessibility to housing that is affordable to current and potential employees of the proposed facility as well as visitors to that facility. Locating workspace and facilities in areas where current and potential employees have a greater opportunity for affordable housing allows employees to live closer to work, thereby inducing walking, biking and mass transit use for work and non-work trips, and minimizing vehicle usage.

**III. Maximize Use of Existing Resources.** Existing resources provide significant opportunities to advance sustainability in Federal facilities. Reuse of previously developed sites can help to revitalize communities, reduce sprawl, and minimize the need for costly new infrastructure and new development.

- a. Leverage Investment in Existing Infrastructure.** Agencies should maximize the use of existing infrastructure and resources, wherever possible, by prioritizing areas that are currently well-served by water, sewer and other relevant public

infrastructure. This infrastructure represents significant local and Federal investment for its construction and maintenance. Locations requiring additional state and local infrastructure investment to solely meet the Federal need should be minimized unless in support of comprehensive state and local plans.

- b. Prioritize Brownfield/Grayfield and Infill Development.** When possible, agencies should prioritize locations that would support the use of previously developed but currently abandoned or underused locations, including, as appropriate, those locations that have undergone proper remediation.
- c. Promote the Preservation of Historic Resources and other Existing Buildings.** Agencies should place emphasis on examining the reuse potential of historic buildings and locating appropriate new buildings in historic districts. This reuse makes the most efficient use of already constructed buildings, supports preservation of historically significant structures, and promotes local economic development.<sup>4</sup>

#### **IV. Foster Protection of the Natural Environment.**

E.O. 13514 instructs agencies to coordinate with regional programs for local ecosystem, watershed, and environmental management. Because many Federal facility decisions are small in scale and may not have a significant impact on a regional ecosystem alone, it is important for agencies to coordinate their facility activities, which over time may collectively have significant impact.

- a. Preserve Existing Ecosystems.** Agencies actions should lead by example by working to preserve environmental resources and considering the impact of the siting of Federal facilities on existing natural resource functions or the potential to disrupt efforts to restore or protect local ecosystems or natural resources<sup>5</sup>. Agencies should take into consideration the existing Federal regulations and guidance<sup>6</sup> on this issue.
- b. Avoid Development of Green Space.** Wherever possible, agencies should strive to avoid development of agricultural and other previously undeveloped land.
- c. Promote Climate Change Adaptation Planning.** When considering new locations, agencies should take into consideration regional and agency climate adaptation planning to support well informed decisions. Further instructions can be found in the *Instructions for Implementing Climate Change Adaptation Planning In Accordance with E.O. 13514*, dated March 4, 2011.

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<sup>4</sup> This aligns with, and is further supported by, requirements in the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA).

<sup>5</sup> E.O. 11988 and E.O. 11990 direct Federal agencies to avoid to the extent possible the long and short term adverse impacts to floodplains and wetlands respectively.

<sup>6</sup> Specifically, refer to the "Technical Guidance on Implementing the Stormwater Runoff Requirements for Federal Projects under Section 438 of the Energy Independence and Security Act (EISA)"

## **Workplace Requirements for Sustainable Federal Location Decisions**

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In order to effectively incorporate sustainable location principles into agency business procedures, agencies must review their workplace planning requirements for alignment with the intent of E.O. 13514 and remove unnecessary barriers to more sustainable practices.

- I. **Maximize Use of Existing Federal Space.** Prior to a Federal agency beginning its planning for a new workplace, it should first examine its existing locations and identify opportunities for more effective space utilization, including consolidation, hoteling, or co-location, consistent with the goals of E.O. 13514 and the Presidential Memorandum entitled '*Disposing of Unneeded Federal Real Estate*', dated June 10, 2010. Agencies should also consider opportunities to collaborate with other agencies by sharing similar types of assets or workspace where missions align.

- II. **Review Workplace Standards to Promote More Efficient Facility Development.** Agencies must review their workplace standards and remove unnecessary impediments to use of efficient existing locations and sustainable future site development. Space utilization rates, long-standing co-location requirements, floor plate sizes, and other physical requirements that undermine the ability to meet workplace needs at a sustainable site should be carefully reviewed and revised, as appropriate, in light of technological advances and new ways of doing business.

Similarly, each agency should give due consideration to its security design requirements. Agencies should look for opportunities to incorporate flexibility, where prudent, both to advance more sustainable development options and reduce unnecessary costs. In particular, agencies should review their standard security design requirements in order to discourage 'one-size fits all' approaches.

- III. **Reduce Parking Demand for Single Occupancy Vehicles.** Since parking requirements may make some sustainable sites less viable, Federal agencies should carefully examine agreements or practices that routinely provide for employee parking at Federal facilities. These agreements should be revised, as necessary and appropriate, to provide for flexibility in pursuing sustainable locations and to align with the intent of E.O. 13514. Similarly, agencies should consider how their location decisions drive demand for parking, for both off-site and on-site employee and visitor parking. Practices that drive inefficient development that are not necessary to advance the agency's core mission should be revised or eliminated.