

Acquisition



WHEN A PUBLIC AGENCY ACQUIRES YOUR PROPERTY

**U.S. Department of Housing
And Urban Development**
Office of Community Planning and Development

www.hud.gov/relocation

Introduction

This booklet describes important features of the **Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970**, as amended (URA) and provides general information about public acquisition of real property (real estate) that should be useful to you.

Most acquisitions of real property by a public agency for a Federal project or a project in which Federal funds are used are covered by the URA. If you are notified that your property will be acquired for such a project, it is important that you learn your rights under this important law.

This booklet may not answer all of your questions. If you have more questions about the acquisition of your property, contact the Agency responsible for the project. (Check the back of this booklet for the name of the person to contact at the Agency.) Ask your questions before you sell your property. Afterwards, it may be too late.

General Questions

What Right Has Any Public Agency To Acquire My Property?

The Federal Government and every State government have certain powers which are necessary for them to operate effectively. For example, they have the power to levy taxes and the power to maintain order. Another government power is the power to acquire private property for public purposes. This is known as the power of eminent domain.

The rights of each of us are protected, however, by the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments of the U.S. Constitution and by State constitutions and eminent domain laws which guarantee that if a public agency takes private property it must pay "just compensation" to the owner. The URA provides additional protections, as explained in this booklet.

Who Made The Decision To Buy My Property?

The decision to acquire a property for a public project usually involves many persons and many determinations. The final determination to proceed with the project is made only after a thorough review which may include public hearings to obtain the views of interested citizens.

If you have any questions about the project or the selection of your property for acquisition, you should ask a representative of the Agency which is responsible for the project.

How Will The Agency Determine How Much To Offer Me For My Property?

Before making you an offer, the Agency will obtain at least one appraisal of your property by a competent real property appraiser who is familiar with local property values. The appraiser will inspect your property and prepare a report that includes his or her professional opinion of its current fair market value. After the appraiser has completed his work, a review appraiser will examine the appraisal report to assure that the estimate is fair and the work conforms with professional appraisal standards.

The Agency must offer you "just compensation" for your property. This amount cannot be less than the appraised fair market value of the property. "Just compensation" for your property does not take into account your relocation needs. If you are eligible for relocation assistance, it will be additional.

What Is Fair Market Value?

Fair market value is sometimes defined as that amount of money which would probably be paid for a property in a sale between a willing seller, who does not have to sell, and a willing buyer, who does not have to buy. In some areas a different term or definition may be used.

The fair market value of a property is generally considered to be "just compensation." Fair market value does not take into account intangible elements such as sentimental value, good will, business profits, or any special value that your property may have for you or for the Agency.

How Does An Appraiser Determine The Fair Market Value Of My Property?

Each parcel of real property is different and therefore no single formula can be devised to appraise all properties. Among the factors an appraiser typically considers in estimating the value of real property are:

- How it compares with similar properties in the area that have been sold recently.
- How much rental income it could produce.
- How much it would cost to reproduce the buildings and other structures, less any depreciation.

Will I Have A Chance To Talk To The Appraiser?

Yes. You will be contacted and given the opportunity to accompany the appraiser on his or her inspection of your property. You may then inform the appraiser of any special features which you believe may add to the value of your property. It is in your best interest to provide the appraiser with all the useful information you can in order to insure that nothing of allowable value will be overlooked. If you are unable to meet with the appraiser, you may wish to have a person who is familiar with your property represent you.

How Soon Will I Receive A Written Purchase Offer?

Generally, this will depend on the amount of work required to appraise your property. In the case of a typical single-family house, it is usually possible to make a written purchase offer within 45 to 60 days of the date an appraiser is selected to appraise the property.

Promptly after the appraisal has been reviewed (and any necessary corrections obtained), the Agency will determine just compensation and give you a written purchase offer in that amount along with a "summary statement," explaining the basis for the offer. No negotiations are to take place before you receive the written purchase offer and summary statement.

What Is In The Summary Statement Of The Basis For The Offer Of Just Compensation?

The summary statement of the basis for the offer of just compensation will include:

- An accurate description of the property and the interest in the property to be acquired.
- A statement of the amount offered as just compensation. (If only part of the property is to be acquired, the compensation for the part to be acquired and the compensation for damages, if any, to the remaining part will be separately stated.)
- A list of the buildings and other improvements covered by the offer. (If there is a separately held interest in the property not owned by you and not covered by the offer (e.g., a tenant-owned improvement), it will be so identified.)

Must I Accept The Agency's Offer?

No. You are entitled to present your evidence as to the amount you believe is the fair market value of your property and to make suggestions for changing the terms and conditions of the offer. The Agency will consider your evidence and suggestions. When fully justified by the available evidence of value, the offer price will be increased.

May Someone Represent Me During Negotiations?

Yes. If you would like an attorney or anyone else to represent you during negotiations, please inform the Agency. However, the URA does not require the Agency to pay the costs of such representation.

If I Reach Agreement With The Agency, How Soon Will I Be Paid?

If you reach a satisfactory agreement to sell your property and your ownership (title to the property) is clear, payment will be made at a mutually acceptable time. Generally, this should be possible within 30 to 60 days after you sign a purchase contract. If the title evidence obtained by the Agency indicates that further action is necessary to show that your ownership is clear, you may be able to hasten the payment by helping the Agency obtain the necessary proof. (Title evidence is basically a legal record of the ownership of the property. It identifies the owners of record and lists the restrictive deed covenants and recorded mortgages, liens, and other instruments affecting your ownership of the property.)

What Happens If I Don't Agree To The Agency's Purchase Offer?

If you are unable to reach an agreement through negotiations, the Agency may file a suit in court to acquire your property through an eminent domain proceeding. Eminent domain proceedings are often called condemnations. If your property is to be acquired by condemnation, the Agency will file the condemnation suit without unreasonable delay.

An Agency may also decide not to buy your property, if it cannot reach agreement on a price, and find another property to buy instead.

What Happens After The Agency Condemns My Property?

You will be notified of the action. Condemnation procedures vary, and the Agency will explain the procedures which apply in your case.

Generally, when an Agency files a condemnation suit, it must deposit with the court (or in an escrow account) an amount not less than its appraisal of the fair market value of the property. You should be able to withdraw this amount, less any amounts necessary to pay off any mortgage or other liens on the property and to resolve any special ownership problems. Withdrawal of your share of the money will not affect your right to seek additional compensation for your property.

During the condemnation proceeding, you will be provided an opportunity to introduce your evidence as to the value of your property. Of course, the Agency will have the same right. After hearing the evidence of all parties, the court will determine the amount of just compensation. If that amount exceeds the amount deposited by the Agency, you will be paid the difference, plus any interest that may be provided by law.

To help you in presenting your case in a condemnation proceeding, you may wish to employ an attorney and an appraiser. However, in most cases the costs of these professional services and other costs which an owner incurs in presenting his or her case to the court must be paid by the owner.

What Can I Do If I Am Not Satisfied With The Court's Determination?

If you are not satisfied with the court judgment, you may file an appeal with the appropriate appellate court for the area in which your property is located. If you are considering an appeal, you should check on the applicable time limit for filing the appeal and consult with your attorney on whether you have a basis for the appeal. The Agency may also file an appeal if it believes the amount of the judgment is too high.

Will I Have To Pay Any Closing Costs?

You will be responsible for the payment of the balance on any mortgage and other liens on your property. Also, if your ownership is not clear, you may have to pay the cost of clearing it. But the Agency is responsible for all reasonable and necessary costs for:

- Typical legal and other services required to complete the sale, recording fees, revenue stamps, transfer taxes and any similar expenses which are incidental to transferring ownership to the Agency.
- Penalty costs and other charges related to prepayment of any recorded mortgage on the property that was entered into in good faith.
- Real property taxes covering the period beginning on the date the Agency acquires your property.

Whenever possible, the Agency will make arrangements to pay these costs directly. If you must incur any of these expenses yourself, you will be repaid--usually at the time of closing. If you later discover other costs for which you should be repaid, you should request repayment from the Agency immediately. The Agency will assist you in filing a claim. Finally, if you believe that you were not properly repaid, you may appeal the decision to the Agency.

May I Keep Any Of The Buildings Or Other Improvements On My Property?

Very often, many or all of the improvements on the property are not required by the Agency. This might include such items as a fireplace mantel, your favorite shrubbery, or even an entire house. If you wish to keep any improvements, please let the Agency know as soon as possible.

If you do arrange to keep any improvement, the Agency will deduct only its salvage value from the purchase price you would otherwise receive. (The salvage value of an item is its probable selling price if offered for sale on the condition that the buyer will remove it at his or her own expense.) Of course, if you arrange to keep any real property improvement, you will not be eligible to receive a relocation payment for the cost of moving it to a new location.

Can The Agency Take Only A Part Of My Property?

Yes. But if the purchase of only a part of your property reduces the value of the remaining part(s), you will be paid for the loss in value. Also, if any remaining part would have little or no utility or value to you, the Agency will offer to buy that remaining part from you.

Occasionally, a public project will increase the value of the part which is not acquired by the Agency. Under some eminent domain laws, the amount of such increase in value is deducted from the purchase payment the owner would otherwise receive.

Will I Have To Pay Rent To The Agency After My Property Is Acquired?

If you remain on the property after the acquisition, you may be required to pay a fair rent to the Agency. Such rent will not exceed that charged for the use of comparable properties in the area.

How Soon Must I Move?

If possible, a mutually agreeable date for the move will be worked out. Unless there is an urgent need for your property (e.g., your occupancy would present a health or safety emergency), you will not be required to move without at least 90 days advance written notice.

If you reach a voluntary agreement to sell your property, you will not be required to move before you receive the agreed purchase price. If the property is acquired by condemnation, you cannot be required to move before the estimated fair market value of the property has been deposited with the court so that you can withdraw your share.

If you are being displaced from your home, you will not be required to move before a comparable replacement home is available to you.

Will I Receive Relocation Assistance?

Title II of the URA requires that certain relocation payments and other assistance must be provided to families, individuals, businesses, farms, and nonprofit organizations when they are displaced or their personal property must be moved as a result of a project that is covered by the URA.

The Agency will furnish you a full explanation of any relocation assistance to which you may be entitled. If you have any questions about such assistance, please contact the Agency. In order for the Agency to fulfill its relocation obligations to you, you must keep the Agency informed of your plans.

My Property Is Worth More Now. Must I Pay Capital Gains Tax On The Increase?

Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Publication 544 explains how the Federal income tax would apply to a gain or loss resulting from the sale or condemnation of real property, or its sale under the threat of condemnation, for public purposes. If you have any questions about the IRS rules, you should discuss your particular circumstances with your personal tax advisor or your local IRS office.

I'm A Veteran. How About My VA Loan?

After your VA home mortgage loan has been repaid, you will be permitted to obtain another VA loan to purchase another property. Check on such arrangements with your nearest Veterans Administration Office.

Is It Possible To Donate Property?

Yes. You may donate your property or sell it to the Agency for less than its fair market value. The Agency must obtain an appraisal of the property and offer just compensation for it, unless you release the Agency from these obligations.

Additional Information

If you have any questions after reading this booklet, contact the Agency and discuss your concerns with the Agency representative.

Agency:

Address:

Office Hours:

Telephone Number:

Person to Contact:

GENERAL URA ACQUISITION PROCESS

(Refer to 49 CFR 24 Subpart B for detailed acquisition requirements)

49 CFR 24.101(b)(1)-(5)	49 CFR 24.101(a) & (b)
<i>Determine if proposed acquisition satisfies criteria and requirements of 24.101(b)(1)-(5). If acquisition does not meet criteria (e.g., is subject to threat or use of eminent domain), refer to involuntary acquisition process and comply with 49 CFR 24 Subpart B requirements.</i>	<i>Determine if proposed acquisition is subject to threat or use of eminent domain. If not subject to eminent domain, refer to voluntary acquisition process and comply with applicable requirements of 49 CFR 24.101(b)(1)-(5). Involuntary Process</i>
24.101(b)(1) - Agencies with eminent domain authority but will not use: must meet all conditions of 24.101(b)(1)(i) – (iv). (see esp. 24.101(b)(1)(i) & (ii))	* Notify owner of agency's interest in acquiring property and protections under the Uniform Act (see 24.102(b)) (Optional: issue Notice of Intent to Acquire (see 24.203(d)))
* Agency will not acquire property if negotiations fail, and owner is so informed in writing (see 24.101(b)(1)(iii))	* Appraise property and invite owner to accompany appraiser (see 24.102(c))
* Agency informs owner in writing of property's estimated market value (see 24.101(b)(iv))	* Review the appraisal (see 24.104)
* Owner/s & owner occupants not eligible for relocation assistance / displaced tenants may be eligible (see 24.2(a)(9)(ii))	* Establish estimate of just compensation for property (see 24.102(d))
24.101(b)(2) – Agencies or persons without eminent domain authority:	* Provide owner with written offer and summary statement for property (see 24.102(e))
* Prior to offer, inform owner unable to acquire if negotiations fail (see 24.101(b)(2)(i))	* Negotiate with owner for purchase of property (see 24.102(f))
* Inform owner of property's estimated market value (see 24.101(b)(2)(ii))	* If negotiations successful, complete sale and reimburse property owner for related incidental expenses (see 24.106)
* Owner/s & owner occupants not eligible for relocation assistance / displaced tenants are eligible (see 24.2(a)(9)(ii))	* If negotiations unsuccessful, consider an administrative settlement (see 24.102(i))
24.101(b)(3) – Acquisition from a Federal agency, State, or State agency, if acquiring agency without eminent domain authority:	* If negotiations still unsuccessful, consider acquiring property through eminent domain.
* Owner/s & owner occupants not eligible for relocation assistance / displaced tenants are eligible (see 24.2(a)(9)(ii))	* Displaced persons eligible for relocation assistance (see 24.2(a)(9)(i))

Helpful Acquisition Information

Appraisal Standards: Appraisals conducted for the acquisition of property for federal funded projects must follow nationally recognized appraisal standards, including the Uniform Appraisal Standards for Federal Land Acquisition. These standards can be found at www.usdoj.gov/enrd/land-ack. At a minimum a detailed appraisal shall contain the following items:

1. The purpose and/or the function of the appraisal, a definition of the estate being appraised, and a statement of the assumptions and limiting conditions affecting the appraisal.
2. An adequate description of the physical characteristics of the property being appraised (and, in the case of a partial acquisition, an adequate description of the remaining property), a statement of the known and observed encumbrances, if any, title information, location, zoning, present use, an analysis of highest and best use, and at least a 5-year sales history of the property.
3. All relevant and reliable approaches to value consistent with commonly accepted professional appraisal practices. When sufficient market sales data are available to reliably support the fair market value for the specific appraisal problem encountered, the Agency, at its discretion, may require only the market approach. If more than one approach is utilized, there shall be an analysis and reconciliation of approaches to value that are sufficient to support the appraiser's opinion of value.
4. A description of comparable sales, including a description of all relevant physical, legal, and economic factors such as parties to the transaction, source and method of financing, and verification by a party involved in the transaction.
5. A statement of the value of the real property to be acquired and, for a partial acquisition, a statement of the value of the damages and benefits, if any, to the remaining real property, where appropriate.
6. The effective date of valuation, date of appraisal, signature, and certification of the appraiser.

Summary Statement of the Basis of Just Compensation: Along with the written purchase offer, a statement of just compensation shall be sent to the property owner. This written explanation of the purchase offer shall include:

1. A statement of the amount offered as just compensation. In the case of a partial acquisition, the compensation for the real property to be acquired and the compensation for damages, if any, to the remaining real property shall be separately stated.
2. A description and location identification of the real property and the interest in the real property to be acquired.
3. An identification of the buildings, structures, and other improvements (including removable building equipment and trade fixtures) which are considered to be part of the real property for which the offer of just compensation is made. Where appropriate, the statement shall identify any separately held ownership interest in the property, e.g., a tenant-owned improvement, and indicate that such interest is not covered by the offer.

Expenses Paid by the Recipient to Transfer the Title: Whenever feasible, the Agency shall pay costs associated with transfer of title directly so that the owner will not have to pay such costs and then seek reimbursement. The owner of the real property shall be reimbursed for all reasonable expenses the owner necessarily incurred for:

1. Recording fees, transfer taxes, documentary stamps, evidence of title, boundary surveys, legal descriptions of the real property, and similar expenses incidental to conveying the real property to the Agency. However, the Agency is not required to pay costs solely required to perfect the owner's title to the real property; and
2. Penalty costs and other charges for prepayment of any preexisting recorded mortgage entered into in good faith encumbering the real property; and the pro rata portion of any prepaid real property taxes which are allocable to the period after the Agency obtains title to the property or effective possession of it, whichever is earlier.

GUIDEFORM NOTICE TO OWNER
- INVOLUNTARY ACQUISITION -
(Threat/Use Of Eminent Domain)

Grantee or Agency Letterhead

(date)

Dear _____:

(City, County, State, Tribe, other) _____, is interested in acquiring property you own at (address) _____ for a proposed project which may receive funding assistance from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) under the _____ program.

The purpose of this notice is to inform you of your rights under a federal law known as the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act (URA). Enclosed is a HUD brochure entitled "When A Public Agency Acquires Your Property". This brochure provides useful information about the public acquisition of real property (real estate) under the URA. At this stage, your property is only under consideration for acquisition. This notice is not a contractual offer or commitment to purchase your property.

If your property is selected for acquisition, under the URA, you will have the right to receive just compensation for your property. In order to determine the amount of just compensation to be offered to you, an appraisal of your property would be required. In such a case, an appraiser will contact you to provide you an opportunity to accompany him or her on the inspection of your property. It would be in your best interest to accompany the appraiser during the property inspection so that you can point out any unique features of your property which should be considered in the valuation process and so that you can also answer any questions the appraiser may have.

For your information, (City, County, State, Tribe, other) _____ possesses eminent domain authority to acquire the property needed for this project, however, our goal is to attempt to negotiate amicable agreements for all property acquisitions prior to its use. If negotiations fail, acquisition under eminent domain may be considered.

If you have any questions about this notice or the proposed project, please contact (name) _____, (title) _____, (address) _____, (phone) _____.

Sincerely,
(name and title) _____

Enclosure

NOTES.

1. The case file must indicate the manner in which this notice was delivered (e.g., certified mail, return receipt requested) and the date of delivery.
2. This is a guideform. It should be revised to reflect the circumstances.

GUIDEFORM
- VOLUNTARY ACQUISITION –
Informational Notice
(Agencies Without Eminent Domain Authority)

Grantee or Agency Letterhead

(date)

Dear _____:

(Name of Agency/Person) _____, is interested in acquiring property you own at (address) _____ for a proposed project which may receive funding assistance from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Please be advised that (Name of Agency/Person) _____ does not have authority to acquire your property by eminent domain. In the event we cannot reach an amicable agreement for the purchase of your property, we will not pursue this proposed acquisition.

We are prepared to offer you (\$) _____ to purchase your property. We believe this amount represents the current market value of your property. Please contact us at your convenience if you are interested in selling your property.

In accordance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act (URA), owner-occupants who move as a result of a voluntary acquisition are not eligible for relocation assistance.

If you have any questions about this notice or the proposed project, please contact (name) _____, (title) _____, (address) _____, (phone) _____.

Sincerely,

(name and title) _____

NOTES.

1. The case file must indicate the manner in which this notice was delivered (e.g., certified mail, return receipt requested) and the date of delivery.
2. Tenant-occupants displaced as a result of a voluntary acquisition may be entitled to URA relocation assistance and must be so informed per 49 CFR 24.2(a)(15)(iv) – Initiations of negotiations, and 49 CFR 24 Appendix A - 24.2(a)(15)(iv).
3. URA does not require that the amount of the offer equal the fair market value.
4. This is a guideform. It should be revised to reflect the circumstances.

Examples of suggested wording:

“The sale is voluntary. If you do not wish to sell, the {CDBG Recipient or Subrecipient} will not acquire the property.”

“The {CDBG RECIPIENT} will not use the power of eminent domain to acquire the property.”

“The {Subrecipient} does not have the power to acquire your property by condemnation.”

“We estimate the fair market value of the property to be \${Dollar Amount}.”

GUIDEFORM
-VOLUNTARY ACQUISITION -
- Informational Notice -
(Agencies With Eminent Domain Authority)

Grantee or Agency Letterhead

(date)

Dear _____:

(City, County, State, other) _____, is interested in acquiring property you own at (address) _____ for a proposed project which may receive funding assistance from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) under the _____ program.

Please be advised that, (City, County, State, other) _____ possesses eminent domain authority to acquire property, however, in the event you are not interested in selling your property, or if we cannot reach an amicable agreement for the purchase of your property, we will not pursue its acquisition under eminent domain.

Your property is not a necessary part of the proposed project and is not part of an intended, planned, or designated project area where substantially all of the property within the area is to be acquired.

We are prepared to offer you (\$) _____ to purchase your property. We believe this amount represents the current market value of your property. Please contact us at your convenience if you are interested in selling your property.

In accordance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act (URA), owner-occupants who move as a result of a voluntary acquisition are not eligible for relocation assistance.

If you have any questions about this notice or the proposed project, please contact (name) _____, (title) _____, (address) _____, (phone) _____.

Sincerely,

(name and title) _____

NOTES.

1. The case file must indicate the manner in which this notice was delivered (e.g., certified mail, return receipt requested) and the date of delivery.
2. Tenant-occupants displaced as a result of a voluntary acquisition may be entitled to URA relocation assistance and must be so informed per 49 CFR 24.2(a)(15)(iv) – Initiations of negotiations, and 49 CFR 24 Appendix A - 24.2(a)(15)(iv).
3. This guideform may only be used if all of the requirements of 49 CFR 24.101(b)(1)(i)-(iv) are met.
4. URA does not require that the amount of the offer equal the estimated Fair Market Value.
5. This is a guideform. It should be revised to reflect the circumstances.

Examples of suggested wording:

“The sale is voluntary. If you do not wish to sell, the {CDBG Recipient} will not acquire your property.”

“The {CDBG Recipient} will not use the power of eminent domain to acquire your property.”

“We estimate the fair market value of the property to be \${Dollar Amount}.”

