

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-19-148](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

VA is one of the largest federal property-holding agencies, and its inventory of vacant buildings has generally increased over the last 6 years. Disposing of its excess properties has been a long-standing challenge.

GAO was asked to review how VA manages its real property disposals. This report addresses: (1) the challenges VA faces in disposing of its vacant properties and how it is addressing those challenges and (2) the extent to which VA is tracking and monitoring the disposal of its vacant properties.

GAO reviewed VA's policies and planning documents regarding property disposals. GAO also selected 31 properties that were either disposed of or planned for disposal in fiscal year 2017, among other selection criteria. GAO interviewed VA officials and stakeholders involved in the disposal of the 31 selected properties and familiar with VA's disposal process, including steps VA is taking to address challenges.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making three recommendations. These include developing disposal procedures for facilities' managers to help plan, implement, and execute disposal projects and collecting key information on the status of disposal projects, as VA implements its plans to increase the capacity of VA's Capital Asset Inventory. VA concurred with GAO's recommendations.

View [GAO-19-148](#). For more information, contact Andrew Von Ah at (202) 512-2834 or vonaha@gao.gov.

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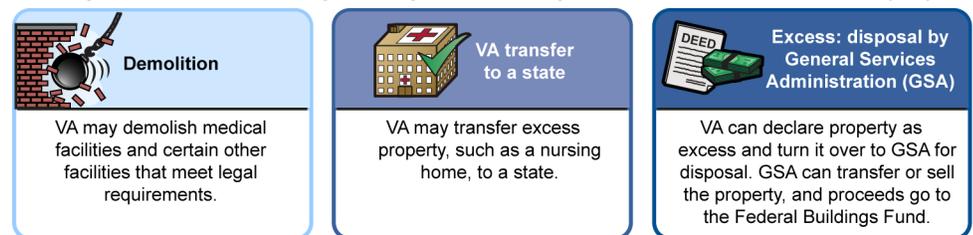
VA REAL PROPERTY

Clear Procedures and Improved Data Collection Could Facilitate Property Disposals

What GAO Found

Conducting required environmental and historic reviews in a timely manner is among the challenges the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) faces in its real property disposal process. These reviews include assessing the potential effects of property disposals on the environment and historic preservation. VA is taking steps to address these ongoing challenges. For example, VA has established a working group consisting of experts in historic preservation, environmental reviews, and real property to assist facilities' managers in expediting disposals. However, other ongoing challenges remain, including the marketability of VA properties and VA's lack of clear procedures for property disposals. While VA has guidance on disposals at the broad portfolio level, GAO determined that this guidance does not contain step-by-step procedures at the project level to assist facilities' managers to plan, implement, and execute disposals for the different disposal options. (See figure.) For example, a number of managers told GAO that they were not familiar with actions to take when transferring properties to a third party or turning over excess property to the General Services Administration for disposal. VA officials commented that facilities' managers do not frequently dispose of properties, so a procedural document outlining the steps and who is responsible for taking those steps may help staff navigate more complex disposal processes and avoid missteps and delays.

Description of Selected Disposal Options for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)



Source: GAO analysis of VA documents. | GAO-19-148

VA has enhanced its data collection on vacant properties, but the agency does not collect information needed to track and monitor disposal projects at the headquarters level. For example, VA requires facilities' managers to verify and certify the validity of vacant property data in the database used to manage real property—the Capital Asset Inventory. On disposal projects, however, VA lacks certain information, such as the status of environmental or historical reviews, to monitor progress. According to VA, the Capital Asset Inventory currently does not have enough capacity to collect key information and supporting documentation. VA officials said they plan to increase the capacity, but VA has not yet included some key information in the Capital Asset Inventory that could enable VA to monitor the progress of disposals. Without information on the status of disposal projects, VA cannot readily track and monitor its progress and identify areas where facilities' managers may need additional assistance.