



UNIFORM RELOCATION ACT (URA)

URA is the common acronym for the federal law known as the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended.

Establishes the MINIMUM standards among agencies and funding recipients for real property acquisition and relocation assistance for federally funded programs and projects.

Enacted to ensure fair and equitable treatment among people whose real property is acquired, or who move as a direct result of projects receiving federal funds.

URA APPLICABILITY

If federal financial assistance is used in any phase of a project where real property is acquired or persons are displaced as a result of an Acquisition, Rehabilitation, or Demolition, URA requirements apply.

REAL PROPERTY ACQUISITION

- An acquisition is the transfer of ownership or rights of real property from one legal entity to another OR a long-term lease of 15 or more years when related to a CDBG-DR funded project.
- The Acquiring agency must determine which acquisition approach applies to the project BEFORE starting any acquisition activity, whether it is a Voluntary (no threat of Eminent Domain) or Involuntary Acquisition (using threat of Eminent Domain).
- Eminent Domain may only be used for a public use project, which does not include projects that primarily benefit private entities.
- URA Subpart B - Real Property Acquisition Requirements does not apply to confirmed Voluntary Acquisitions.
 - The project must satisfy all applicable requirements first to be considered a Voluntary acquisition.
 - A Voluntary Acquisition is not simply defined by a property being for sale or a willing seller.
- Donations may occur when the property owner forgoes all or part the just compensation – this is still an acquisition subject to certain URA requirements.
- An appraisal and an appraisal review are required for ALL acquisitions, except for certain donations.
- PRDOH and Subrecipients must properly notify owners in writing, have an appraisal and review appraisal conducted, establish just compensation, issue a written offer, enter negotiations, and document everything.
- Involuntary Acquisitions should attempt to be resolved through agreement before using eminent domain.



RELOCATION ACTIVITIES

- A displaced person is entitled to receive proper written notifications, relocation advisory services, referral to comparable replacement dwellings, payments for replacement housing and moving expenses.
- A non-residential displaced person can be a business, farm or nonprofit who is eligible for relocation advisory services and may choose between payment for actual and reasonable expenses or a fixed payment in lieu.
- Some projects require occupants to relocate temporarily until they can return to their property. URA establishes minimum requirements for the temporary relocation for residential and non-residential tenants.
- A “person not displaced” includes many definitions listed at 24 C.F.R. § 24.2(a)(9)(ii) including owners of real property that is acquired voluntarily; these persons are typically not eligible for relocation assistance.

PLANNING

- Planning for acquisition and relocation activities should begin early in the project planning process to establish the scope, budget, timeline and responsible parties. A well-planned project may be completed on time and on schedule, whereas, a poorly planned project can result in delays, funding shortfalls, and non-compliance with URA.

NOTIFICATIONS

- URA regulations weigh heavy on the requirements to properly notify in writing both property owners and tenants related to property acquisition and relocation assistance.
- These notices provide important information about the project, the affected person's resulting rights, their protections, and their eligibility for relocation assistance for payments under URA. It is critical for PRDOH and Subrecipients to issue appropriate notices to the affected persons at the appropriate times from proposal to funding commitment and through execution.

RECORD KEEPING

- URA requires agencies and funding recipients to maintain adequate records for acquisition and displacement activities to demonstrate compliance.
- Acquisition and occupancy records are required regardless of whether displacement is anticipated.

For URA related questions, please contact:

María Angélica Rodríguez, Esq. - fairhousing@vivienda.pr.gov