

15 FAM 250

HOUSING PROFILE PROCEDURES

(CT:OBO-12; 09-14-2006)
(Office of Origin: OBO)

15 FAM 251 POST HOUSING PROFILE FACTORS

15 FAM 251.1 General

(CT:OBO-1; 04-29-2005)
(Uniform State/USAID/Commerce/Agriculture/DIA)

The post maintains a housing profile that relates post-housing requirements to space standards (see 15 FAM Exhibit 237A and 15 FAM Exhibit 237B). There is a difference between the properties that are in a post's existing inventory and the properties approved in a post's profile: the housing profile represents the ideal mix of residences to meet the post's long-term housing requirements, while the housing inventory is all U.S. Government-held residential property at post. The main elements that factor into the post housing profile are position structure and post demographics. Implementation of the housing program links these factors with the inventory and local market conditions. The goal is to manage a cost-effective housing program that results in the closest match possible of the inventory with the profile under prevailing market conditions.

15 FAM 251.2 Post Position Structure

(CT:OBO-1; 04-29-2005)
(Uniform State/USAID/Commerce/Agriculture/DIA)

The housing profile is based on the position structure at post, not the personal grade of incumbents. The number of positions at each of the three ranks (see 15 FAM Exhibit 237A and 15 FAM Exhibit 237B) provides an initial indication of housing requirements in relation to space standards.

15 FAM 251.3 Post Demographics

(CT:OBO-1; 04-29-2005)

(Uniform State/USAID/Commerce/Agriculture/DIA)

The demographics reflect historical and projected family sizes. For instance, at a particular grade level, the current staffing structure may show that 30 percent of the employees are single, 30 percent are families of two, 35 percent are families of three to four, and five percent are families of five or more. Post housing profiles reflect these percentages in quantifying the size of housing units needed at any particular grade. Given the objective of retaining properties over a longer term in order to achieve cost savings, posts must factor into the profile adequate flexibility to accommodate anticipated fluctuations in family size.

15 FAM 251.4 Local Real Estate Market

(CT:OBO-7; 04-26-2006)

(Uniform State/USAID/Commerce/Agriculture/DIA)

A survey of the local real estate market provides an objective assessment of current market conditions and enables the post to select competitively from a range of housing (see 15 FAM 212.6). The assessment of the local market should include background information on the general availability of housing requirements for residential security standards and other security considerations, location of schools, costs, etc. Posts should use the results of the survey to document conditions relating to the cost and availability of suitable housing, develop housing profiles, and establish rental ceilings for each housing tier. If housing that meets space standards is not available in the local market, post must prepare appropriate supporting information for inclusion in the housing profile.

15 FAM 252 ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES

15 FAM 252.1 Overseas Staffing Model (OSM) Category 1 and Category 2 Posts and Other Small Posts with Fewer than 10 Direct-Hire U.S. Citizen Employees

(CT:OBO-7; 04-26-2006)

(Uniform State/USAID/Commerce/Agriculture/DIA)

- a. In lieu of preparing the demographic profile information, OSM category 1 and category 2 posts, and posts with 10 or fewer direct-hire U.S. citizen

employees need only match current staffing with the housing inventory. Information should be provided to the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) by agency, indicating rank of employee, property ID, gross or net measurements, number of bedrooms, and annual cost (expressed in U.S. currency).

- b. Posts should identify any adjustments that must be made to existing inventory to conform to the standards.
- c. Posts should also identify any post-specific factors affecting the housing profile, consider a market survey if one has not been conducted within the past year, and provide substantiation that leased housing is competitively priced.

15 FAM 252.2 Posts with Controlled Access to Housing and Posts with no Free Housing Market

(CT:OBO-1; 04-29-2005)

(Uniform State/USAID/Commerce/Agriculture/DIA)

At certain posts, host governments may control access to housing and there is no free housing market. Such posts are not required to follow the format for establishing a profile based on demographics. Rather, the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) will work with these posts to develop a profile that focuses on costs and includes a variety of housing.

15 FAM 253 HOUSING SELECTION

15 FAM 253.1 Space

(CT:OBO-7; 04-26-2006)

(Uniform State/USAID/Commerce/Agriculture/DIA)

Space should be the first criterion in selecting properties for housing abroad, but it is not the overriding factor, particularly in markets where housing availability is limited and/or other restrictions limit where employees may live. Selection criteria should include, but not be limited to, design layouts, special employee circumstances, desired locations (including as wide a variety as possible, approved by the regional security officer (RSO) or post security officer (PSO)), availability of normal amenities (electricity, telephone, indoor plumbing), size, and security requirements.

15 FAM 253.2 Cost

(CT:OBO-1; 04-29-2005)

(Uniform State/USAID/Commerce/Agriculture/DIA)

Combined with size, cost is a prime consideration in the selection of housing. Costs of residential properties will vary according to location, quality of construction, and amenities (verandas or balconies, recreational facilities, gardens, garages). A comparative review of annual rental costs should be a basis for housing selection. Cost comparisons based on per square foot calculations are valid only for units of similar size and category. For instance, a 3,000 square foot house may cost only \$12 per square foot whereas a 2,000 square foot house is \$15 per square foot. Annual lease costs for the properties are \$36,000 and \$30,000, respectively; clearly, the larger house is not a bargain if your requirement is for a smaller unit. Post should ensure that such cost comparisons are made on similarly sized properties located in similar areas of the city.

15 FAM 253.3 Distance

(CT:OBO-7; 04-26-2006)

(Uniform State/USAID/Commerce/Agriculture/DIA)

In applying these guidelines, post management and the post interagency housing board (IAHB) must seek suitable housing at the lowest possible cost to the U.S. Government. All locations within reasonable commuting time, which meet security criteria, should be considered. The Washington, DC average one-way commuting time of 45 minutes for U.S. Government employees will be considered reasonable, unless the post IAHB, upon recommendation of the regional security officer (RSO) or regional management officer (RMO), establishes a longer or shorter time to address security or environmental concerns. Geographic considerations to housing beyond security or environmental reasons (e.g., employee convenience) are not acceptable.

15 FAM 253.4 Security Considerations

(CT:OBO-7; 04-26-2006)

(Uniform State/USAID/Commerce/Agriculture/DIA)

- a. As residential security considerations are U.S. Government policy under 12 FAM 300, the regional security officer/post security officer (RSO/PSO) must identify all suitable locations where the security environment relative to crime, civil disorder, terrorism, and police coverage is considered acceptable. The RSO/PSO must provide recommendations on the types of housing most suited to the post security environment. The

RSO/PSO must conduct or supervise an inspection of those prospective residential properties selected for inclusion in the housing inventory and make a determination on their securability within the context of current residential security guidelines.

- b. Properties requiring extensive security upgrades must be carefully considered in the context of the availability of appropriate funding. All posts, particularly those where the established residential security guidelines require upgrades not normally provided in local housing, must request approval and funding for such improvements from the residential security program through the RSO. Security upgrade costs are funded by the Bureau of Diplomatic Security (DS) and should not be funded from any leasehold accounts.
- c. At all posts, but particularly those where the crime or terrorism threat level is rated as high or critical, the post interagency housing board (IAHB) should select residences that inherently maximize the safety and security of employees, while minimizing additional supplemental resources needed to further upgrade security, e.g., guards and residential security equipment. The objective of the residential security program is to ensure the acquisition of housing that provides a degree of security appropriate to the local threat level. To assist in the selection process, the following types of housing should be considered:
 - (1) **Apartment buildings:** Post's emergency action committee (EAC) should determine if apartment buildings are preferable to scattered apartment units, detached houses, townhouses, or cluster housing. In some instances, U.S. Government buildings and cluster housing may be considered attractive targets for terrorist bombings or mobs. Conversely, to maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of supplemental security protection (e.g. local guards), apartment buildings and cluster housing within a compound or small geographic area offer the best protection where crime is the major threat. For apartment buildings and high-occupancy cluster housing, location, available setback, type of construction, and access controls are important selection criteria when considering protection against the terrorism threat. The EAC, in consultation with the RSO, must weigh all these factors before recommending that the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) lease, purchase, or build any apartment buildings or high-occupancy cluster housing; and
 - (2) **Apartment units:** If an apartment building does not have adequate security protection, posts may acquire individual apartments, focusing their selection on units above the second floor. At high and critical threat posts, the total number of apartments in any one building should be reasonably limited so as

- to not present an attractive concentration of mission personnel unless the building, as a whole, has effective perimeter or access controls.
- d. In general, comprehensive lock, lighting, grill, and gate systems provide maximum physical security under the control of the occupant. In some instances, they may be sufficient and preferable.
 - e. The RSO/PSO must approve all housing acquisitions; in cases of disagreement, no property may be leased or occupied until the dispute is resolved.
 - f. Since U.S. diplomatic facilities can become targets for terrorism, demonstrations, or civil disturbances, OBO, as a general rule, should not acquire or construct new office buildings with U.S. Government residential compounds and housing areas. Construction of new residences on new or existing embassy or consulate compounds in accordance with the physical security standards for on-compound housing is permitted.

15 FAM 253.5 Safety, Health and Environmental Requirements

(CT:OBO-12; 09-14-2006)

(Uniform State/USAID/Commerce/Agriculture/DIA)

- a. In accordance with 15 FAM requirements, safety, health and environmental hazards need to be identified in the selection of housing to eliminate the possibility of dangerous conditions that can cause serious injuries or fatalities. Posts must verify that residences under consideration for purchase or lease have been inspected by the post occupational safety and health officer (POSHO) for safety, health and environmental hazards, and that those hazards have been effectively controlled or eliminated. Prior to occupying a residence, the POSHO must certify that the following requirements are met:
 - (1) Removal of all unvented gas flash water heaters that cannot be relocated or properly vented to the outdoors in accordance with manufacturer's instructions;
 - (2) Inspection by a qualified technician of all combustion heating equipment and systems for proper operation;
 - (3) Installation of at least a 4-foot fence (or other barrier) surrounding the entire pool and separating all pools from residences. The gate must be self-latching, lockable, and *the latch must be* located at least 4.5 feet off the ground;
 - (4) Installation of carbon monoxide alarms in any residence that has combustion-type appliances (except cooking stoves) or an enclosed

garage; and

(5) Grounding of the electrical system.

- b. In addition, the POSHO should utilize the Department of State Residential Safety, Health, and Fire Prevention Awareness Checklist (see 15 FAM Exhibit 111) as a guide to assist in identifying other unsuitable conditions in residences to be resolved prior to occupancy. Posts are strongly encouraged to install ground-fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) for electrical outlets in all bathrooms and kitchens; GFCIs are currently required for electrical outlets around all swimming pools.

15 FAM 253.6 Seismic Safety (Guidance-Selected Posts Only)

(CT:OBO-7; 04-26-2006)

(Uniform State/USAID/Commerce/Agriculture/DIA)

- a. In accordance with 15 FAM requirements of providing safe, secure, and functional housing, post management and the post interagency housing board (IAHB) should follow the guidance below to seek suitable housing with the lowest possible risk to life/safety at selected high-seismic activity posts, i.e., those for which full or partial OBO residential seismic surveys have been performed (which in 2005 were Almaty, Athens, Beijing, Bishkek, Bogotá, Caracas, Dhaka, Guatemala, Istanbul, Kathmandu, Lima, Mexico City, Santo Domingo, Taipei, and Tashkent):
- (1) Selected posts are encouraged to address the seismic adequacy of leased residential units (primarily in multi-unit buildings) and seek housing that is seismically the best available;
 - (2) Selected posts are encouraged to include seismic-life safety in the housing decision matrix; and
 - (3) Means and methods to address seismic safety (primarily in multi-unit buildings) and purchase buildings determined to be seismically adequate may include any one (or more) of the following:
 - (a) Assessment of seismic adequacy by engaging the services of a local structural engineer (either by owner and/or by post);
 - (b) Requesting municipality assistance in certifying seismic safety;
 - (c) Requesting services of OBO in-house professional engineering staff and/or OBO seismic consultants; and
 - (d) Utilizing qualitative guidance (e.g., aesthetic/architectural features).

Limited funding for seismic assessments by local engineers is available from

the OBO Natural Hazards Program upon written request.

- b. Given that seismically adequate housing stock is relatively limited in some regions of the world, the guidance in this section should be followed with a fair degree of flexibility. Nevertheless, in view of serious life/safety concerns in seismic areas as well as the impracticality of mitigating the seismic inadequacy of leased buildings or the costs of possibly abandoning them as inadequate, it is only prudent to include seismic considerations in pre-acquisition activities. For further information or assistance, contact OBO's seismic specialists in the Civil Structural Branch in the Design and Engineering Division of the Project Execution Office (OBO/PE/DE/CSB).

15 FAM 254 THROUGH 259 UNASSIGNED