

Top 3 Federal Building Trends for 2014

By Bob Peck/December 2013

I. Continuing campaign to freeze/reduce the federal footprint from OMB, GSA and Congress

A. Agencies are setting downsizing metrics and policies

1. There are too many edicts; benchmarking is good, edicts are bad: one size doesn't fit all functions
2. Telework as a mandate rather than a tool is a mistake
3. Feds are sometimes missing the other side of the equation, which private firms grasp: the space needs to be effective as well as smaller, you need a balanced workplace: focus and collaboration space, virtual and face-to-face interaction, choices of work settings

B. Many agencies still lack the technology tools (laptops, Wi-Fi, VPN/Citrix) and policies that enable the more flexible, networked workplace

-This is even more important as the Boomer replacements in agencies -- and the public -- expect Feds to be tech savvy

C. Many agencies are struggling to meet the costs; one trend is the "furniture solution"

1. An upfront investment is required to reap long-term savings and this can be hard to budget for these days
2. "Furniture solution": buying new furniture that works in more open environments, is adaptable as functions change; can require less extensive building renovation

II. Efforts to encourage public-private partnerships (including land swaps) for major projects: FBI, Federal Triangle South, major HQ renovations

A. This approach is common in state and local government, so there are best practices and experienced private sector parties to call on

B. In the Federal government, there are major challenges: Federal budget scoring rules and OMB and CBO guidance make it hard to use

III. Transit-oriented locations, mandated in Executive Order 13514 (2009)

A. Matches trend in Washington-area private sector toward locations near transit, housing and amenities

B. Problem is: the closer to Metro, the higher the rent