



Unit Cost Study

Project Data: Construction Cost Model

The Unit Cost Study was developed by Steven Winter Associates, Inc. and key subcontractors to create a construction cost model that reflects U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) Public Buildings Service (PBS) design criteria. The model provided the basis of unit pricing for the GSA General Construction Cost Review Guide (GCCRG), thus enabling planning phase new construction cost estimating, and providing the basis for the benchmarking of construction costs, and supporting the development of GSA’s rent algorithms.

The cost model characterized in the Unit Cost Study represented a different approach from previous GSA cost studies. One goal was to separate the Shell & Core costs from Tenant improvements. Therefore, the study developed and examined conceptual models for four Shell & Core types (office building, courthouse, laboratory, and utility building) and 26 Space Types or tenant improvements (such as office, enhanced office, general storage, parking, labs, child care, classroom, auditorium, library, courtrooms, and joint use retail). Component costs were summarized in a variety of shell and core and tenant improvements combinations to reflect GSA’s new construction needs.

The new approach was developed in response to the significant changes to GSA’s pricing policies, the need to define additional space types, and an expanded role for the GCCRG. The GCCRG has been used by GSA’s cost estimators to establish anticipated construction costs during the planning phase and offers a cost benchmark reference to compare with other estimating sources. Over time, however, the role of the GCCRG has expanded from an internal document used to encourage parity between projects to a tool to forecast the cost of new construction projects for the purpose of securing design fees. The GCCRG is now used to establish one of the first—and potentially the most important—cost estimates in the development of any GSA building.

During the course of developing the cost models, care was taken to ensure that the quality of construction specified represented an acceptable interpretation of GSA’s criteria and that the quantity of space described in the models

Unit Cost Study Estimated Construction Costs

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GSA Task No: P1100MA0579
October 2000



Client: General Services Administration
Location: Online
Project Status: Ongoing

Reference: www.wbdg.org

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reflected appropriate and achievable efficiencies in the relationship of tenant (useable) space to overall (gross) area.

The resultant costs were likewise evaluated and compared to those in previous studies. It is important to note that a direct comparison to previous unit cost studies is not possible because of the extensive overhaul and



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update of material provided the of 0.22 ACH; condensing furnaces with an AFUE rating of 94.1 and SEER-18 air conditioning units for lower level zone; a SEER-17.4/9.75 HSPF heat pump for upper level zones; tankless hot water heaters with an efficiency rating of 0.84; mastic sealing and foamed-over buried ducts in the attic to achieve 112 cfm duct leakage to outside (5%) for both zones combined; and ENERGY STAR fixtures and appliances.

In addition to energy features, the Clipper Mill homes include a host of green building strategies to meet LEED for Homes objectives. Measures include the use of drought tolerant plants, water saving fixtures, and environmentally preferable products like recycled drywall, low VOC paints, and local materials. With the help of SWA, Baltimore developers Struever Bros. Eccles & Rouse along with its partner Clipper For Sale LLC are slated to have the first LEED for Homes Silver Certified home in the Mid-Atlantic region.