

U.S. Department of State

The Building of The New ARRA Funded Passport Offices

Article provided by U.S. Department of State, Real Property Management Bureau, Eric Leonard, A/OPR/RPM (LeonardEO@state.gov)

Atlanta, GA



The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Recovery Act) was signed into law by President Obama on February 17, 2009. It was an unprecedented effort to jumpstart our economy, create or save millions of jobs, and put a down payment on addressing long-neglected challenges so that our country can thrive in the 21st century.

The stated goal for Recovery Act funding from the State Department website was:

The Department of State (DOS) seeks to use Recovery Act funds to: create and save jobs; repair and modernize domestic infrastructure crucial to the safety of American citizens; enhance energy independence and reduce global warming by “greening” our facilities; and expand consular services offered to the American taxpayer.

That is what the Recovery Act is. What follows is how some of the Recovery Act funds have been utilized to increase the presence of the full range of Passport Services to America.

Early in 2009, approximately \$15 million of the Recovery Act funds provided to the Department of State were allocated to building new Passport Offices to fill in the “gaps” in our nationwide network of

Passport Offices.

Real Property Management (RPM), Consular Affairs (CA), Diplomatic Security (DS) and other State Department Bureaus working in partnership with the General Services Administration (GSA), were charged with finding suitable locations for new Passport Offices.

After months of market survey site visits around the country, six suitable locations were finally found. The process to procure the space, obtain leases, design the space, procure contractor services, build, furnish, staff and operate these six offices began. This enormous task depended on the complete cooperation and thorough coordination of many departments both within GSA and the State Department. These offices were to be built utilizing Recovery Act funds and all of the funds had to be obligated by the end of FY2010.

The locations selected below were based on very specific State Department needs determined by the ability of the nation’s population to have access to Passport Services and demands determined by national security.

Passport Services (PPT) working in partnership with GSA Region 4 selected Atlanta, GA as the location for a new Passport agency. This facility located at 230 Peachtree Street, would be open to the >>>

Buffalo, NY

>>> public and would allow the State Department to provide Atlanta and the southeastern areas of the U.S. with easy access to our full range of passport services.

Atlanta is the 8th largest metropolitan area in the U.S.. Its airport is the busiest in the world with 88 million passengers per year. Prior to the opening of this Passport agency, residents had the choice of traveling to Miami, FL (662 miles), Washington, DC (648 miles) or New Orleans, LA (412 miles) for emergency passport assistance. The Atlanta facility will operate 15 public counters and will employ 50 government and contract staff.

Passport Services (PPT) working in partnership with GSA Region 2 selected Buffalo, NY as a prime location to build a new Passport agency. This facility, located at the newly renovated historic property at



123 Genesee Street, would be open to the public and would allow the State Department to provide the citizens and travelers of northwestern New York State with access to our full range of passport services. This facility will be equipped to issue both passport cards and passport books to "will-call" expedite fee cases to assist the travelling public in emergency situations.

Buffalo is the gateway to Canada for the populous northeast corridor,

with three of the busiest northern land border crossings, handling 4 million travelers per year, within close proximity of the city. Prior to opening this agency, residents had the choice of traveling to New York City, NY (395 miles) or Detroit, MI (365 miles) for emergency services. This facility will operate five public counters and will employ 27 government and contract staff.

El Paso, TX was an obvious choice for a new Passport Office. Working in partnership with GSA Region 7, the market was surveyed and a centrally located historic property, currently under renovation, was selected. This public facility is located at 303 N. Oregon Street, with access to our full range of passport services.

El Paso is home to one of the busiest land border crossing on the Mexican border with more than 5 million pedestrian crossings per year. Prior to opening, the agency residents had the choice of traveling to Tucson, AZ (319 miles); Houston, TX (670 miles) or Dallas, TX (570 miles).

This facility will be equipped to issue both passport cards and passport books to expedite fee cases to assist the travelling public in emergency situations. The El Paso Agency will have eight public counters and employ 37 government and contract staff.

Passport Services (PPT) >>>



El Paso, TX



>>> working in partnership with GSA Region 1 selected St. Albans, VT as the location for a new Passport Office. This facility, located in an old historic Post Office at 56 South Main Street, will be open to the public and allow the Department to provide the citizens of Vermont with access to our full range of passport services.

St Albans, VT, just a few miles from the Canadian border, is designed to serve U.S. citizens in the most northern corner of the United States.

This facility will be equipped to issue both passport cards and passport books to “will-call” expedite fee cases to assist the travelling public in emergency situations. St Albans’ Passport Agency will operate two public counters and will employ 17 government and contract staff.

Working closely with GSA Region 9, San Diego, CA was also an easy choice for a new Passport Office. Located in the Columbia Center, at 401 West A Street, it is centrally located to the downtown San Diego public. This facility will provide the California public with a full range of services. The San Diego Passport Office will be equipped to issue both passport cards and passport books to “will-call” expedite fee cases to assist the travelling public in emergency situations.

San Diego, CA is the 17th largest metropolitan area in the U.S..

Citizens in California apply for twice as many passports as the citizens of any other state. The two existing agencies resident in California, located in Los Angeles and San Francisco, have extremely busy counters, consistently ranking among the top five counter agencies.

In addition San Diego is located in close proximity to San Ysidro and Otay Mesa points of entry from Mexico, which handles about 4 million travelers per year. This facility will operate 15 public counters and will employ 50 government and contract staff.

Passport Services (PPT) in partnership with GSA Region 1 sought to expand our existing network by locating public counters and a 25,000 square foot (SF) addition to the National Passport Center (NPC) in Portsmouth, NH. Although currently a dedicated adjudication/processing center, NPC would accommodate referred applicants on an ad hoc, limited basis

The NPC is our largest issuance agency. The new 25,000 SF addition permits us not only to add public counter service with the full range of passport services for residents of New Hampshire and other New England locations, but also permits us to collocate our fraud and adjudication functions, thereby improving coordination between these critical areas. The center will

operate three public counters.

These six new locations will increase the number of Passport offices with public access to 27. The schedule for these six projects is listed in the chart below.

(Graphic of chart showing Passport Office locations and project status)

Lesons Learned

Armed with the knowledge that these new and expanded facilities were being built to help all Americans have better access to Passport Services, these projects were from the beginning - high visibility and high priority. This coupled with the newly implemented procedures for reporting and tracing the Recovery Act funding meant the collaboration between the various State Department Bureaus and GSA >>>





>>> had to be coordinated at an unprecedented level.

There were many setbacks caused by changes in scope, changes in procurement requirements and the multitude of reporting, accounting and procedural changes required to process Recovery Act funds within both GSA and the State Department.

Despite all of these issues, utilizing creative solutions coupled with the dedication and perseverance of many people within GSA and the State Department, the allocated Recovery Act funds provided to build these Passport Offices will be obligated as mandated and all of the Passport offices should open within a six month period of each other.

I believe this experience has taught everyone who has worked on these projects valuable lessons that will be utilized on all future endeavors where the Department of State and GSA work together. ¶

	Lease/OA	CD Comp.	Con. Award	Occupancy
Atlanta	3/12/2010	5/7/2010	6/1/2010	Oct-2010
Buffalo	1/15/2010	3/29/2010	5/28/2010	Sep-2010
El Paso	3/22/2010	4/15/2010	6/01/2010	Oct-2010
San Diego	4/16/2010	6/18/2010	7/16/2010	Mar-2011
St Albans	11/9/2009	1/29/2010	4/27/2010	Oct-2010
Portsmouth	10/15/2009	1/21/2010	3/2/2010	Oct-2010