

Reg. Section 1.1031(a)-3(a)

Definition of real property



(a) Real property.

(1) In general. The term real property under section 1031 and §§1.1031(a)-1 through 1.1031(k)-1 means land and improvements to land, unsevered natural products of land, and water and air space superjacent to land. Under paragraph (a)(5) of this section, an intangible interest in real property of a type described in this paragraph (a)(1) is real property for purposes of section 1031 and this section. Property that is real property under State or local law as provided in paragraph (a)(6) of this section is real property for purposes of section 1031 and this section.

(2) Improvements to land.

(i) In general. The term improvements to land means inherently permanent structures and the structural components of inherently permanent structures.

(ii) Inherently permanent structures.

(A) In general. The term inherently permanent structure means any building or other structure that is a distinct asset within the meaning of paragraph (a)(4) of this section and is permanently affixed to real property and that will ordinarily remain affixed for an indefinite period of time. Affixation is considered permanent if it is reasonably expected to last indefinitely based on all the facts and circumstances.

(B) Building. A building is any structure or edifice enclosing a space within its walls, and covered by a roof, the purpose of which is, for example, to provide shelter or housing, or to provide working, office, parking, display, or sales space. Buildings include the following distinct assets if permanently affixed: Houses, apartments, hotels, motels, enclosed stadiums and arenas, enclosed shopping malls, factories and office buildings, warehouses, barns, enclosed garages, enclosed transportation stations and terminals, and stores.

(C) Other inherently permanent structures. Inherently permanent structures under paragraph (a)(2)(ii) of this section include the following distinct assets, if permanently affixed: In-ground swimming pools; roads; bridges; tunnels; paved parking areas, parking facilities, and other pavements; special foundations; stationary wharves and docks; fences; inherently permanent advertising displays for which an election under section 1033(g)(3) is in effect; inherently permanent outdoor lighting facilities; railroad tracks and signals; telephone poles; power generation and transmission facilities; permanently installed telecommunications cables;

microwave transmission, cell, broadcasting, and electric transmission towers; oil and gas pipelines; offshore platforms, derricks, oil and gas storage tanks; and grain storage bins and silos. Affixation to real property may be accomplished by weight alone. If property is not listed as an inherently permanent structure in paragraph (a)(2)(ii)(B) or (C) of this section, the determination of whether the property is an inherently permanent structure under paragraph (a)(2)(ii) of this section is based on the following factors-

- (1) The manner in which the distinct asset is affixed to real property;
- (2) Whether the distinct asset is designed to be removed or to remain in place;
- (3) The damage that removal of the distinct asset would cause to the item itself or to the real property to which it is affixed;
- (4) Any circumstances that suggest the expected period of affixation is not indefinite; and
- (5) The time and expense required to move the distinct asset.

(iii) Structural components.

(A) In general. The term structural component means any distinct asset, within the meaning of paragraph (a)(4) of this section, that is a constituent part of, and integrated into, an inherently permanent structure. If interconnected assets work together to serve an inherently permanent structure (for example, systems that provide a building with electricity, heat, or water), the assets are analyzed together as one distinct asset that may be a structural component. A structural component may qualify as real property only if the taxpayer holds its interest in the structural component together with a real property interest in the space in the inherently permanent structure served by the structural component. If a distinct asset is customized, the customization does not affect whether the distinct asset is a structural component. Tenant improvements to a building that are inherently permanent or otherwise classified as real property within the meaning of this paragraph (a)(2)(iii) are real property under this section. However, property produced for sale, such as bricks, nails, paint, and windowpanes, that is not real property in the hands of the producing taxpayer or a related person, as defined in section 1031(f)(3), but that may be incorporated into real property by an unrelated buyer, is not treated as real property by the producing taxpayer.

(B) Examples of structural components. Structural components include the following items, provided the item is a constituent part of, and integrated into, an inherently permanent structure: Walls; partitions; doors; wiring; plumbing systems; central air conditioning and heating systems; pipes and ducts; elevators and escalators; floors; ceilings; permanent coverings of walls, floors, and ceilings; insulation; chimneys; fire suppression systems,

including sprinkler systems and fire alarms; fire escapes; security systems; humidity control systems; and other similar property. If a component of a building or inherently permanent structure is a distinct asset and is not listed as a structural component in this paragraph (a)(2)(iii)(B), the determination of whether the component is a structural component under this paragraph (a)(2)(iii) is based on the following factors-

(1) The manner, time, and expense of installing and removing the component;

(2) Whether the component is designed to be moved;

(3) The damage that removal of the component would cause to the item itself or to the inherently permanent structure to which it is affixed; and

(4) Whether the component is installed during construction of the inherently permanent structure.

(3)Unsevered natural products of land. Unsevered natural products of land, including growing crops, plants, and timber; mines; wells; and other natural deposits, generally are treated as real property for purposes of this section. Natural products and deposits, such as crops, timber, water, ores, and minerals, cease to be real property when they are severed, extracted, or removed from the land.

(4)Distinct asset.

(i) In general. For this section, a distinct asset is analyzed separately from any other assets to which the asset relates to determine if the asset is real property, whether as land, an inherently permanent structure, or a structural component of an inherently permanent structure. Buildings and other inherently permanent structures are distinct assets. Assets and systems listed as a structural component in paragraph (a)(2)(iii)(B) of this section are treated as distinct assets.

(ii) Facts and circumstances. The determination of whether a particular separately identifiable item of property is a distinct asset is based on all the facts and circumstances. In particular, the following factors must be taken into account-

(A) Whether the item is customarily sold or acquired as a single unit rather than as a component part of a larger asset;

(B) Whether the item can be separated from a larger asset, and if so, the cost of separating the item from the larger asset;

(C) Whether the item is commonly viewed as serving a useful function independent of a larger asset of which it is a part; and

(D) Whether separating the item from a larger asset of which it is a part impairs the functionality of the larger asset.

(5)Intangible assets.

(i) In general. Intangible assets that are real property for purposes of section 1031 and this section include the following items: Fee ownership; co-ownership; a leasehold; an option to acquire real property; an easement; stock in a cooperative housing corporation; shares in a mutual ditch, reservoir, or irrigation company described in section 501(c)(12)(A) of the Code if, at the time of the exchange, such shares have been recognized by the highest court of the State in which the company was organized, or by a State statute, as constituting or representing real property or an interest in real property; and land development rights. Similar interests are real property for purposes of section 1031 and this section if the intangible asset derives its value from real property or an interest in real property and is inseparable from that real property or interest in real property. The following intangible assets are not real property for purposes of section 1031 and this section, regardless of the classification of such property under State or local law-

(A) Stock not described in paragraph (a)(5)(i) of this section, bonds, or notes;

(B) Other securities or evidences of indebtedness or interest;

(C) Interests in a partnership (other than an interest in a partnership that has in effect a valid election under section 761(a) to be excluded from the application of all of subchapter K);

(D) Certificates of trust or beneficial interests; and

(E) Choses in action.

(ii) Licenses and permits. A license, permit, or other similar right that is solely for the use, enjoyment, or occupation of land or an inherently permanent structure and that is in the nature of a leasehold, easement, or other similar right, generally is an interest in real property under this section. However, a license or permit to engage in or operate a business on real property is not real property or an interest in real property, regardless of its classification under State or local law.

(6) State or local law. Except as otherwise provided in paragraph (a)(5) of this section, property is real property within the meaning of paragraph (a)(1) of this section under State or local law if, on the date it is transferred in an exchange, the property is real property under the law of the State or local jurisdiction in which that property is located.

(7) No inference outside of section 1031. The rules provided in this section concerning the definition of real property apply only for purposes of section 1031. No inference is intended with respect to the classification or characterization of property for other purposes of the Code, such as depreciation and sections 1245 and 1250. For example, a structure or a portion of a structure may be section 1245 property for depreciation purposes and for determining gain under section 1245, notwithstanding that the structure or the portion of the structure is real property under this section. Also, a taxpayer transferring relinquished property that is section 1245 property in a section 1031 exchange is subject to the gain recognition rules under section 1245 and the regulations under section 1245, notwithstanding that the relinquished property or replacement

property is real property under this section. In addition, the taxpayer must follow the rules of section 1245 and the regulations under section 1245, and section 1250 and the regulations under section 1250, based on the determination of the relinquished property and replacement property being, in whole or in part, section 1245 property or section 1250 property under those Code sections and not under this section.

(b)Examples. The following examples illustrate the provisions of this section. In each example, unless otherwise provided, the State or local law of the applicable jurisdiction in which the property at issue is located does not address whether the property is real property.

(1)

Example (1). Natural products of land. A owns land with perennial fruit-bearing plants that A harvests annually. The unsevered plants are natural products of the land within the meaning of paragraph (a)(3) of this section and thus are real property for purposes of section 1031. A annually harvests fruit from the plants. Upon severance from the land, the harvested fruit ceases to be part of the land and therefore is not real property. Storage of the harvested fruit upon or within real property does not cause the harvested fruit to be real property.

(2)

Example (2). Water space superjacent to land. B owns a marina comprised of U-shaped boat slips and end ties. The U-shaped boat slips are spaces on the water that are surrounded by a dock on three sides. The end ties are spaces on the water at the end of a slip or on a long, straight dock. B rents the boat slips and end ties to boat owners. The boat slips and end ties are water space superjacent to land and thus are real property within the meaning of paragraph (a)(1) of this section.

(3)

Example (3). Indoor sculpture.

(i) C owns an office building and a large sculpture in the atrium of the building. The sculpture measures 30 feet tall by 18 feet wide and weighs five tons. The building was specifically designed to support the sculpture, which is permanently affixed to the building by supports embedded in the building's foundation. The sculpture was constructed within the building. Removal would be costly and time consuming and would destroy the sculpture. The sculpture is reasonably expected to remain in the building indefinitely.

(ii) The sculpture is not an inherently permanent structure listed in paragraph (a)(2)(ii)(C) of this section, and, therefore, C must use the factors provided in paragraphs (a)(2)(ii)(C)(1) through (5) of this section to determine whether the sculpture is an inherently permanent structure. The sculpture-

(A) Is permanently affixed to the building by supports embedded in the building's foundation;

(B) Is not designed to be removed and is designed to remain in place indefinitely;

(C) Would be damaged if removed and would damage the building to which it is affixed;

(D) Is expected to remain in the building indefinitely; and

(E) Would require significant time and expense to move.

(iii) The factors described in paragraphs (a)(2)(ii)(C)(1) through (5) of this section all support the conclusion that the sculpture is an inherently permanent structure

within the meaning of paragraph (a)(2)(ii)(A) of this section. Therefore, the sculpture is real property.

(4)

Example (4). Bus shelters.

(i) D owns 400 bus shelters, each of which consists of four posts, a roof, and panels enclosing two or three sides. D enters into a long-term lease with a local transit authority for use of the bus shelters. Each bus shelter is prefabricated from steel and is bolted to the sidewalk. Bus shelters are disassembled and moved when bus routes change. Moving a bus shelter takes less than a day and does not significantly damage either the bus shelter or the real property to which it was affixed.

(ii) The bus shelters are not permanently affixed enclosed transportation stations or terminals, are not buildings under paragraph (a)(2)(ii)(B) of this section, nor are they listed as types of other inherently permanent structures in paragraph (a)(2)(ii)(C) of this section. Therefore, the bus shelters must be analyzed to determine whether they are inherently permanent structures using the factors provided in paragraphs (a)(2)(ii)(C)(1) through (5) of this section. The bus shelters-

(A) Are not permanently affixed to the land or an inherently permanent structure;

(B) Are designed to be removed and not remain in place indefinitely;

(C) Would not be damaged if removed and would not damage the sidewalks to which they are affixed;

(D) Will not remain affixed indefinitely; and

(E) Would not require significant time and expense to move.

(iii) The factors described in paragraphs (a)(2)(ii)(C)(1) through (5) of this section all support the conclusion that the bus shelters are not inherently permanent structures within the meaning of paragraph (a)(2)(ii) of this section. Thus, the bus shelters are not inherently permanent structures within the meaning of paragraph (a)(2)(ii) of this section and, therefore, are not real property.

(5)

Example (5). Industrial 3D printer and generator.

(i) E owns a building that it uses in its trade or business of manufacturing airplane parts. The building includes an industrial 3D printer that can print airplane wings and an electrical generator that serves the building and the 3D printer in a backup capacity. The 3D printer weighs 12 tons, is designed to remain in place indefinitely once installed in the building, and its removal would be time-consuming and very costly, and would cause significant damage to the building. The 3D printer was installed during the building's construction. The generator also was installed during construction and is designed to remain in place indefinitely once installed. Although costly and time-consuming to remove, removal of the generator will not result in substantial damage to the generator or the building.

(ii) The 3D printer is not listed as an example of a structural component under paragraph (a)(2)(iii)(B) of this section. Therefore, the 3D printer must be analyzed to determine whether it is a structural component using the factors provided in paragraphs (a)(2)(iii)(B)(1) through (4) of this section. The 3D printer-

- (A) Is time-consuming and costly to move;
- (B) Is not designed to be moved;
- (C) If removed, would cause significant damage to the building in which it is located; and
- (D) Was installed during construction of the building.

(iii) The factors described in paragraphs (a)(2)(iii)(B)(1) through (4) of this section support the conclusion that the 3D printer is a structural component of E's building and real property under this section. Thus, the 3D printer is real property.

(iv) The electrical generator also is not listed as an example of a structural component under paragraph (a)(2)(iii)(B) of this section and must be analyzed to determine whether it is a structural component using the factors provided in paragraphs (a)(2)(iii)(B)(1) through (4) of this section. The generator-

- (A) Is time-consuming and costly to move;
- (B) Is not designed to be moved;
- (C) If removed, would not result in significant damage to the generator or the building in which it is located; and
- (D) Was installed during construction of the building.

(v) The factors described in paragraphs (a)(2)(iii)(B)(1) through (4) of this section, considered in the aggregate, support the conclusion that the generator is a structural component of E's building. Although the generator's removal would not result in significant damage to the generator or to E's building, that factor does not outweigh the factors supporting the conclusion that it is a structural component. Consequently, the generator is a structural component of E's building and real property under this section.

(6)

Example (6). Raised flooring for industrial 3D printer.

(i) The facts are the same as in paragraph (b)(5), Example 5, except that E, when installing its 3D printer, also installed a raised flooring system for the purpose of facilitating the operation of the 3D printer. The raised flooring system is not designed or constructed to remain permanently in place. Rather, the raised flooring system can be removed, without any substantial damage to the system itself or to the building, and then reused. The raised flooring was installed during the building's construction.

(ii) Although floors are listed as an example of a structural component under paragraph (a)(2)(iii)(B) of this section, the raised flooring system installed to facilitate the operation of E's 3D printer is not a constituent part of, and integrated into, an inherently permanent structure as required by paragraph (a)(2)(iii)(A) of this section and, therefore, is not flooring as listed in paragraph (a)(2)(iii)(B) of this section. Thus, the raised flooring must be analyzed to determine whether it is a structural component of E's building (within the meaning of paragraph (a)(2)(iii) of this section) using the factors provided in paragraphs (a)(2)(iii)(B)(1) through (4) of this section. The raised flooring-

- (A) Is installed and removed quickly and with little expense;
- (B) Is designed to be moved and is not designed specifically for the particular building of which it is a part;
- (C) Is not damaged, and the building is not damaged, upon its removal; and
- (D) Was installed during construction of the building.

(iii) The factors described in paragraphs (a)(2)(iii)(B)(1) through (4) of this section, considered in the aggregate, support the conclusion that the raised flooring is not a structural component of E's building within the meaning of paragraph (a)(2)(iii) of this section. Although the raised flooring was installed during construction of the building, that factor does not outweigh the factors supporting the conclusion that the flooring is not a structural component. Therefore, the raised flooring is not real property.

(7)

Example (7). Steam turbine.

(i) F owns a building with a large steam turbine attached as a fixture to the building. The steam turbine is a component of a system used for the commercial production of electricity for sale to customers in the ordinary course of F's business as an electric utility. The steam turbine also generates electricity for F's building. The steam turbine takes up a substantial portion of the building and is designed to remain in place indefinitely once installed in F's building. The steam turbine was installed during the construction of the building and its removal would be costly and cause damage to the building.

(ii) The steam turbine is not listed as an example of a structural component under paragraph (a)(2)(iii)(B) of this section and must be analyzed to determine whether it is a structural component using the factors provided in paragraphs

(a)(2)(iii)(B)(1) through (4) of this section. The steam turbine-

(A) Is costly to remove from the building in which it is located;

(B) Is not designed to be moved;

(C) If removed, would cause damage to the building; and

(D) Was installed during construction of the building.

(iii) The factors described in paragraphs (a)(2)(iii)(B)(1) through (4) of this section support the conclusion that the steam turbine is a structural component of F's building and real property under this section. Thus, the steam turbine is real property.

(8)

Example (8). Partitions.

(i) G owns an office building that it leases to tenants. The building includes partitions owned by G that are used to delineate space within the building. The office building has two types of interior, non-load-bearing drywall partition systems: A conventional drywall partition system (Conventional Partition System) and a modular drywall partition system (Modular Partition System). Neither the Conventional Partition System nor the Modular Partition System was installed during construction of the office building. Conventional Partition Systems are comprised of fully integrated gypsum board partitions, studs, joint tape, and covering joint compound. Modular Partition Systems are comprised of assembled panels, studs, tracks, and exposed joints. Both the Conventional Partition System and the Modular Partition System reach from the floor to the ceiling. In addition, both are distinct assets as described in paragraph (a)(4) of this section.

(ii) Depending on the needs of a new tenant, the Conventional Partition System may remain in place when a tenant vacates the premises. The Conventional Partition System is integrated into the office building and is designed and

constructed to remain in areas not subject to reconfiguration or expansion. The Conventional Partition System can be removed only by demolition, and, once removed, neither the Conventional Partition System nor its components can be reused. Removal of the Conventional Partition System causes substantial damage to the Conventional Partition System itself, but does not cause substantial damage to the building.

(iii) Modular Partition Systems are typically removed when a tenant vacates the premises. Modular Partition Systems are not designed or constructed to remain permanently in place. Modular Partition Systems are designed and constructed to be movable. Each Modular Partition System can be readily removed, remains in substantially the same condition as before, and can be reused. Removal of a Modular Partition System does not cause any substantial damage to the Modular Partition System itself or to the building. The Modular Partition System may be moved to accommodate the reconfigurations of the interior space within the office building for various tenants that occupy the building.

(iv) The Conventional Partition System is comprised of walls that are integrated into an inherently permanent structure and are listed as structural components in paragraph (a)(2)(iii)(B) of this section. Thus, the Conventional Partition System is real property.

(v) The Modular Partition System is not integrated into the building as required by paragraph (a)(2)(iii)(A) of this section and, therefore, is not listed in paragraph (a)(2)(iii)(B) of this section. Thus, the Modular Partition System must be analyzed to determine whether it is a structural component using the factors provided in paragraphs (a)(2)(iii)(B)(1) through (4) of this section. The Modular Partition System-

(A) Is installed and removed quickly and with little expense;

(B) Is designed to be moved and is not designed specifically for the particular building of which it is a part;

(C) Is not damaged, and the building is not damaged, upon its removal; and

(D) Was not installed during construction of the building.

(vi) The factors described in paragraphs (a)(2)(iii)(B)(1) through (4) of this section support the conclusion that the Modular Partition System is not a structural component of G's office building within the meaning of paragraph (a)(2)(iii) of this section. Therefore, the Modular Partition System is not real property.

(9)

Example (9). Pipeline transmission system.

(i) H owns a natural gas pipeline transmission system that provides a conduit to transport natural gas from unrelated third-party producers and gathering facilities to unrelated third-party distributors and end users. The pipeline transmission system is comprised of underground pipelines, isolation valves and vents, pressure control and relief valves, meters, and compressors. Each of these distinct assets was installed during construction of the pipeline transmission system and each was designed to remain permanently in place.

(ii) The pipelines are permanently affixed and are listed as other inherently permanent structures in paragraph (a)(2)(ii)(C) of this section. Thus, the pipelines are real property.

(iii) Isolation valves and vents are placed at regular intervals along the pipelines to isolate and evacuate sections of the pipelines in case there is need for a shut-down or maintenance of the pipelines. Pressure control and relief valves are installed at regular intervals along the pipelines to provide overpressure protection. The isolation valves and vents and pressure control and relief valves are not listed in paragraph (a)(2)(iii)(B) of this section and, therefore, must be analyzed to determine whether they are structural components using the factors provided in paragraphs (a)(2)(iii)(B)(1) through (4) of this section. The isolation valves and vents and pressure control and relief valves-

(A) Are time consuming and expensive to install and remove from the pipelines;

(B) Are designed specifically for the particular pipelines for which they are a part;

(C) Will sustain damage and will damage the pipelines if removed; and

(D) Were installed during construction of the pipelines.

(iv) The factors in paragraphs (a)(2)(iii)(B)(1) through (4) of this section support the conclusion that the isolation valves and vents and pressure control and relief valves are structural components of H's pipelines within the meaning of paragraph (a)(2)(iii) of this section. Therefore, the isolation valves and vents and pressure control and relief valves are real property.

(v) Meters are used to measure the natural gas passing into or out of the pipeline transmission system for purposes of determining the end users' consumption. Over long distances, pressure is lost due to friction in the pipeline transmission system. Compressors are required to add pressure to transport natural gas through the entirety of the pipeline transmission system. H installed meters and compressors during the construction of the pipelines. However, unlike other types of such meters and compressors, these particular meters and compressors are not time consuming and expensive to install and remove from the pipelines; are not designed specifically for the particular pipelines for which they are a part; and their removal does not cause damage to the asset or the pipelines if removed. Therefore, the meters and compressors installed by H are not structural components within the meaning of paragraph (a)(2)(iii) of this section and, therefore, are not real property.

(10)

Example (10). State or local law determination of property.

(i) J owns water pipeline in State X that it wants to exchange for cell phone towers located in State Y. On the date that J transfers the water pipeline in an exchange for the cell phone towers, the water pipeline is classified as real property under the law of State X, the jurisdiction in which the water pipeline is located.

(ii) The water pipeline is real property under paragraphs (a)(1) and (a)(6) of this section, regardless of whether the water pipeline is listed as an inherently permanent structure or a structural component of an inherently permanent structure, or is real property under the factors listed in paragraph (a)(2)(ii)(C) or (a)(2)(iii)(B) of this section.

(iii) Cell phone towers are listed as an inherently permanent structure under paragraph (a)(2)(ii)(C) of this section. Thus, the cell phone towers that J acquires in the exchange for the water pipeline are real property under this section,

regardless of the State or local characterization of the cell phone towers or whether the cell phone towers are real property under the factors in paragraph (a)(2)(ii)(C) or (a)(2)(iii)(B) of this section.

(11)

Example (11). Land use permit. K receives a special use permit from the government to place a cell tower on Federal Government land that abuts a Federal highway. Government regulations provide that the permit is not a lease of the land, but is a permit to use the land for a cell tower. Under the permit, the government reserves the right to cancel the permit and compensate K if the site is needed for a higher public purpose. The permit is in the nature of a leasehold that allows K to place a cell tower in a specific location on government land. Therefore, the permit is an interest in real property under paragraph (a)(5) of this section.

(12)

Example (12). License to operate a business. L owns a building and receives a license from State A to operate a casino in the building. The license applies only to K's building and cannot be transferred to another location. L's building is an inherently permanent structure under paragraph (a)(2)(ii)(A) of this section and, therefore, is real property. However, L's license to operate a casino is not a right for the use, enjoyment, or occupation of L's building, but is rather a license to engage in or operate the casino business in the building. Therefore, the casino license is not real property or an interest in real property under paragraph (a)(5)(ii) of this section.

(c) Applicability date. This section applies to exchanges beginning after December 2, 2020.