

Tip Sheet: Looking for Bridge Housing Sites

California's housing and real estate markets pose real challenges to identifying bridge housing sites, but locating bridge housing sites is possible using the tips below.

1. Consider Underused State-Owned Property

Look at the [Statewide Property Inventory \(SPI\)](#) to find a property that may be available to lease. The legislature created the SPI in 1989 to proactively manage the state's real property assets in a computerized format. The SPI captures detailed information on land owned and leased by the state, structures owned and leased by the state, and property the state leases to the private sector. The Department of General Services also offers information on [surplus real property for sale or lease](#).

2. Behavioral Health Agency, City or County Properties

Think creatively about repurposing publicly owned properties. Counties are already sponsoring Behavioral Health Bridge Housing (BHBH) projects, and you are working with BHAs. Visit local government websites and get on mailing lists and start paying attention to what city and county governments are doing. Set up a time to meet with colleagues to discuss properties that might be appropriate for BHBH use.

3. Network (see Landlord Engagement 101)

Talk with people and groups you normally interact with, including property managers with whom you already work. Have an elevator speech prepared that helps you explain what you are doing, whom you are helping, and the kind of resources you can provide landlords and those you serve. Ask people to let you know if they have a tip on a location that will be available soon. You might find that your church has an unused rectory or that people have apartments or mother-in-law units that could be made available.

4. Look for properties for purchase *below market rates*.

Many federal agencies have properties for sale. The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development ([HUD HOMES FOR SALE](#)) links to foreclosed single and multi-family properties through a range of agencies. Properties are often listed for prices well below market rates.

- a. **Fannie Mae [Community First by Fannie Mae](#)** offers approved community-minded buyers priority access and competitive pricing to help them implement local solutions for affordable housing. This site includes comprehensive search tools, a transparent offer process, and exclusive access to properties.
- b. **Freddie Mac** has homes for sale in many areas. Search [available homes](#) on the Freddie Mac website.
- c. **HUD offers weekly listings of multifamily properties and special programs.** Multi-family properties are offered on an all-cash, as-is basis. No financing or mortgage insurance is provided, but these could offer an opportunity for interested parties.
- d. **[Surplus real property is made available by the US General Services Administration for public use.](#)** Federal properties that are no longer needed are sometimes made available for public use to state/local governments, regional agencies, or non-profit organizations. Property must be used for the public good through activities such as public health or education, homeless assistance, and self-help housing agencies. GSA's Office of Property Disposal [describes this process](#).

- e. HUD also has special programs: [HUD-Approved Nonprofits](#) and [Dollar Homes-Government Sales](#). The Dollar Homes initiative might be a great fit for BHBH, as it caters to local governments selling homes for \$1 due to foreclosure, but opportunities are extremely limited.

5. Take a Drive.

Drive around the community, write down addresses, and identify characteristics of unused and abandoned properties. If you can get in touch with the owners, you might be able to lease and repurpose them. Structures might include empty commercial spaces, motels/hotels, abandoned houses, and apartment buildings.

Property ownership is public information. Visit the county assessor's office in person or online. Some counties will allow you to search by address or use the assessor's identification number. Alternatively, you can visit the county recorder. The person or entity recorded on a property deed is the owner. People with un- or under-used property might be willing to rent or lease to you.

6. Talk to the Faith Community.

Set up a time to speak with the local faith community. Some have housing resources that they already use to bridge program members from homelessness to permanent housing. For example, check out [Interfaith Community Services](#) and click on "Get Services" and then "Housing." This interfaith organization is located in San Diego, but your city or county may also be home to similar faith-based efforts.

7. Check housing search engines

Many sites let you look for units using a range of factors, including affordability, community, number of bedrooms, and more:

- [Apartments.com](#)
- [California Low-Income Apartments and Section 8 Waiting Lists](#)
- [California Housing Partnership's affordable housing search](#)
- [Rent.com](#)
- [PadMapper](#)
- [Apartmentmentguide.com](#)
- [Zillow.com](#)

Craigslist, Facebook Marketplace, Reddit, and other local bulletin boards list rentals. This may turn out to be a resource that brings you in contact with independent local housing providers. Be careful, as there are also frequent fraudulent listings.

8. Look for other federal housing resources.

Collaborate with the HUD [Continuum of Care](#) and providers, working together to help eligible people access housing.

Public housing agencies (PHAs) are funded by HUD to manage public housing and Housing Choice Vouchers. HUD's website lists [contact information for California PHAs](#). Due to demand, waitlists are frequently closed. If so, get on notification lists, so you know when they open.

The United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development site offers a [searchable map of affordable rentals in rural communities](#).