

# Bridge Housing Communities

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

### Updated 2/12/2018

On September 27, 2016, AB 2176 was signed into law by Governor Jerry Brown. Beginning January 1, 2017, the bill amends the Shelter Crisis Act to authorize a five-year pilot program allowing the City of San José to create emergency Bridge Housing Communities (BHC) for homeless residents. Over the past year, the City of San José's Housing Department has sought input on the siting, development, and operation of BHC. Staff has coordinated with the City Council, neighborhood residents, and City partners throughout the process.

On February 12, 2018, after evaluating and ranking 122 potential BHC sites, the Housing Department released the locations of the top three BHC candidate sites. Over the next several months, the Housing Department will be hosting community meetings in neighborhoods adjacent to the three sites as well as completing an environmental review for the candidate sites. Housing Department staff anticipates returning to City Council in early to late summer 2018 for final site selection. This FAQ is being provided to answer many of the questions that the City has received to date.

**Q: Does AB 2176 allow the City to bypass all environmental reviews of the candidate BHC sites?**

A: No. The City is not exempt from conducting an environmental review of each candidate BHC site. All proposed BHC sites are mandated to go through a full environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

**Q: *The City's proposal for BHCs seems expensive. I have read that each home will cost between \$73,000 to \$90,000. Is this accurate?***

A: No. The cost of each sleeping cabin is currently estimated between \$18,000 and \$20,000. These initial cost estimates were based on conceptual designs and sample BHC sites. As City staff continues to work with its partners to finalize the BHC designs, building codes, construction methods and materials, it is anticipated that these cabin costs will be reduced.

**Q: *Where did the \$73,000 to \$90,000 cost estimate come from?***

A: These initial projected costs were provided to the City Council at the December 12, 2017 meeting and included all costs associated with development of a BHC. These costs represent three major categories associated with the development and construction of a BHC and are all based on conceptual designs. Over the next several months, these costs will be reevaluated and refined. The three categories include:

- 1) *Emergency Sleeping Cabin costs* - These costs range depending on the type of structure. The current estimated cost for emergency sleeping cabins is between \$18,000 and \$20,000. City staff believe that these costs will be significantly reduced as City staff continue to work with its partners to finalize the BHC designs, building codes, construction methods and materials.
- 2) *Community space* – In addition to providing emergency sleeping cabins, the Housing Department is proposing to include portable buildings at each site that will provide residents and staff with fully accessible restrooms, showers, and a basic community kitchen, as well as meeting space for residents, staff, and service providers. The community space is essential to

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the health and safety of the residents and surrounding community as well as the overall success of the BHC.

- 3) *Site development costs* – This cost is associated with preparing the land to accommodate the BHC. These costs include bringing water, electricity, sewer, and other utilities from the street to the site as well as grading and clearing the site to accommodate a BHC. These costs would be required for any type of interim community. As with the emergency sleeping cabin costs, staff anticipate these costs being significantly reduced with the actual sites identified and thoroughly analyzed.

***Q. Why not just use utility sheds like other communities?***

A. Every jurisdiction must assess the needs of their community and determine the best approach to address the range of complex challenges it faces. The City of San José’s approach to interim housing is to provide a healthy, safe, and dignified living environment for its residents.

Although utility sheds may provide a slightly less expensive alternative, these types of structures do not provide some basic human needs such heat, adequate ventilation, and fire safety protections. The Housing Department believes basic utility sheds are insufficient to provide the desired level of health, safety and dignity to the residents and surrounding neighborhood. Additionally, under the AB 2176 legislation, San José’s Bridge Housing must include basic health and safety requirements. Lastly, some of these communities require that the residents leave during the day because of the limitation of the structures.

***Q. Wouldn’t it be cheaper to buy utility sheds and modify them to meet the requirements of AB 2176?***

A. The City could choose to purchase prefabricated utility sheds and modify them to meet the requirements under AB 2176 but this will likely result in little to no cost savings from the planned emergency sleeping cabins. In addition, the sleeping cabins must meet the minimum size requirement of 70 square feet for individuals and 120 square feet for two occupants.

***Q: Will the pilot BHC become permanent – or will BHC sites disband once AB 2176 sunsets in January 2022?***

A: It is currently anticipated that any Bridge Housing Community will disband when AB 2176 sunsets in January 2022. However, it is undetermined if AB 2176 will be extended through State Legislation. Additionally, the emergency sleeping cabins as well as the community buildings will be designed to allow some mobility should the City identify alternative uses of locations.

***Q: Did the City of San José favor specific sites and develop the site scoring criteria to favor certain potential BHC sites?***

A: No. Over the past year, Housing Department staff has received input from the City Council and the community on BHC site selection. The methodology used to rank the list of potential sites was based on that collective feedback and was reviewed and approved by the City Council on December 12, 2017.

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***Q. What was the scoring based on? How were the top three sites identified?***

The site scoring criteria was developed after receiving significant input from the community, City Council, and development partners. Site evaluation began by assessing basic site needs such as minimal size requirements, access to utilities and site ownership. Sites that met the minimal site requirements were then ranked based on an objective scoring process that factored in community concerns - like setbacks to schools and residential - and other pertinent site factors (i.e. environmental constraints) to determine the top three candidate sites. The setbacks from pre-K-12<sup>th</sup> grade schools and residential surpass other initiatives (i.e. Marijuana Collectives) that raised similar community concerns.

***Q. Has the City of San José determined who will reside in the BHC?***

A. Unhoused working or adults with a work history will reside in the pilot BHC. Residents will be assessed through Santa Clara Counties Coordinated Care system and will be required to have or develop a housing plan to exit Bridge Housing.

***Q: Is there an ongoing opportunity to provide feedback?***

A: Yes. The Housing Department will begin informing the community about an upcoming outreach and engagement process, and residents interested in participating are encouraged to attend. Any resident who would like to receive updates about the BHC project should email:

[bridgehousingcommunities@sanjoseca.gov](mailto:bridgehousingcommunities@sanjoseca.gov)

***Q: Does the development of affordable housing increase crime and/or lower property values in the area in which its developed?***

A: There is no valid evidence to suggest that affordable housing increases crime or negatively impacts property values in the area in which it is developed.

***Q: Will there be services and security on-site at the BHC?***

A: Yes. For the first year of the BHC pilot, the Site Operator will be required to provide 24-hour on-site security seven days a week. In addition, program services staff will be on-site to provide site management and resident services. At least two fulltime Case Managers will be on site to provide support to residents. After one year of operation, the City will reevaluate the need for 24-hour security.

***Q. Is bridge housing really the answer to ending homelessness here in San José?***

A: No. Bridge Housing is just one of many solutions to assist in our effort to end homelessness. Because of the enormity and complexity of homelessness in San José and across the region, a full range of housing opportunities is required. According to evidence-based best practice research, the creation of permanent housing is the most effective long-term solution to ending homelessness in San José and across the county. Bridge housing is just one of many housing opportunities being created as an “interim solution” to bridge homeless individuals from the street to permanent housing.

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**Q: Why construct only 40 sleeping cabins in the BHC – as it's only going to address a fraction of the homelessness crisis?**

In addition to the BHC project, the City is supporting many initiatives intended to address interim solutions until permanent housing can be built. Recent interim solutions include the opening of overnight warming locations (OWL), the adoption of an incidental and temporary shelter ordinance, and the conversion of two hotels. The BHC pilot project is one additional option. The BHC pilot will provide the City with critical information about the success's and challenges of developing and operating BHCs.