

Bridge Housing Communities

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

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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?

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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.

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-12th 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. To find out upcoming community meetings and to receive updates about the BHC project email: 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. Depending on the size of the final site, one –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

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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.

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

A: 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.

7/6/18 Updates

Q: Why was the 100-foot setback from major creeks and tributaries and their riparian corridors (measured from the nearest BHC building to the outside drip line of the Riparian Corridor vegetation or top-of-bank, whichever is greater) requirement removed?

A: While AB 2176 allows the City to suspend many State and Local regulatory requirements like the Riparian Corridor Development Policy in the development of BHC communities, Housing Department staff recommended that the 100-foot setback requirement be included in the site selection criteria.

[July 28, 2017 Information Memo to the Mayor and City Council regarding New Site Selection for BHC](#)

After staff presented recommendations on August 29, 2017, the Mayor and Council provided Housing Department staff with direction to adopt a revised BHC site selection criteria focused on prioritizing potential BHC sites by viability and readiness. Though the Riparian Corridor Development Policy was not identified in the City Council adopted selection criteria, the 100-foot setback from creeks and tributaries was considered when evaluating environmental constraints. The current two BHC candidate sites are not impacted by these setback requirements. Both sites are well beyond the 100-foot requirement.

Q: After the Riparian criteria was removed, why did the city not return to the list of 99 sites and include the sites that that had been previously excluded because of this criteria?

A: As Mentioned in the previous answer, the 100-foot setback was weighed in the review of environmental constraints and applied to all of the sites including the original list of 99 as well as the sites shared with 23 sites shared by our partner agencies VTA, Caltrans and Santa Clara Valley Water District.

Q: The Mayor and City Council have requested staff to, "formulate a detailed community outreach and engagement strategy. We must not only allow for residents to provide input and participate, but we must also provide residents with crucial information about program guidelines and operations."

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- **Where can the public access this plan?**

A1: Per City Council Direction on August 29, 2017, the Housing Department included a community engagement plan for BHC in the December 12, 2017 staff recommendations on page 24 and 25 of the staff report.

[December 12, 2017 – City Council Memo regarding BHC](#)

The Plan outlined two phases of outreach including site specific outreach and ongoing neighborhood outreach. The site-specific outreach was completed in March and included two town hall meetings that provided an overview of homelessness in San Jose, Bridge Housing concepts, and participant Q&A. Once the final BHC site is selected, the City and BHC operator, HomeFirst will establish BHC advisory group that will consist of BHC oversight committee, BHC residents and the surrounding community to meet regularly. Since the December staff report was approved by Council on December 12, 2017, the Housing Department has added an additional set of outreach events including four BHC neighborhood workshops to be held throughout July (Workshop link).

- **It is my understanding that the Housing Department has hired a professional facilitator. What is the role of this person? Are they facilitating the outreach meetings?**

A2: The City hired professional facilitator Malka Kopell, co-founder of Civity, to help organize and facilitate the two town hall meetings that were conducted on February 22nd and February 26th. Malka consulted with City staff on meeting outlines, agenda, and meeting facilitation. Malka was hired to facilitate the town hall meetings and consult on future outreach. The four community workshops were designed to focus on more resident and stakeholder dialogue and less formal facilitation so professional facilitation will not be utilized for the four workshops taking place in July.

Q: What happens to the residents who break rules and are asked to leave? Won't this add more homeless on our streets.

A: BHC residents *will* be required to follow community rules just as an apartment tenant or hotel guest would be required to follow applicable rules. Just like apartment tenants or hotel guests, there will be consequences for not following rules at the BHC, which may include removal. As with any other regulatory requirement, whether it's a law, rule, or code of conduct, the penalty will be based on the severity of the infraction. In other words, not all violations will constitute removal. Along with rules and codes of conduct, there will be an established protocol for dealing with violations at the BHC.

While Bridge Housing is a fairly new and unique model for development, the population being served and the services are very similar to rapid rehousing program (RRP) models that have been successful around the country for several years. Historically, these types of programs experience 85% to 90% success transitioning individuals from homelessness to permanent housing. In addition to the traditional support provided through RRP, San José is proposing a higher level of services, support, and resident coordination at the BHC's aimed at transitioning to permanent housing. While it is possible that a small

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number of BHC residents might not successfully transition to permanent housing, the overall impact of BHC will be a reduction of homeless on the streets.

Q: If the law is extended, would the city move the project to another site? I am concerned that this will be extended and this bridge housing project will be here permanently.

A: Currently, AB 2176 is set to expire on January 1, 2022. Only the State Legislature can extend the law. While the City or Site are not currently exploring extension of AB 2176, it is possible that the State might consider extending beyond 2022 if the Bridge Housing model were successful. Presumably, a well-integrated and successful BHC model would ease concerns and would be welcomed by the surrounding community.

Q: If this is a successful pilot project, what sites would you choose? Seems that there are very few to choose from so how could this be a good solution if there are no viable sites?

A: After establishing the pilot BHC and operating for one year, Housing staff will be reporting back to City Council on the successes and lessons learned while developing and implementing the pilot BHC. At that point, staff will seek direction from the City Council on future BHC development, including siting of future communities.

Currently there are two viable potential sites being evaluated to host the pilot BHC. City Council may elect to utilize the site not selected for the BHC pilot to host the second BHC. Other possibilities include:

- New City sites not originally included in the list of 99 sites - The original list of 99 sites was City surplus land in 2017 when the siting process began. The City periodically adds new sites to the surplus list when older city facilities are retired or when acquiring land through purchase or trade.
- Partner agencies – the City will continue to explore partnerships with other public agencies such as Caltrans, VTA, and Santa Clara Valley Water District which yielded the two site being considered for the pilot BHC.
- Lease of private land – Although costly, the City may consider leasing private property such as future housing development sites if feasible. This may be even more viable once the first pilot has been established and lessons learned result in BHC development and operation costs reductions.
- Scalability – Once the pilot BHC has been established and development and operations are better understood, site requirements will be re-evaluated. It is possible that smaller sites can accommodate BHC's.

There are many possibilities for siting future Bridge Housing Communities if the program is successful.

Q: How would the local homeless be stopped from using the facilities? Will it be fully gated?

A: There are several factors built into the development and operations to deter uninvited guests:

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- The facility will be fenced and gated.
- Security - for the first year of operation the facility will have 24/7 security. After the first year, the security needs will be reassessed and adjusted accordingly.
- Onsite staffing - in addition to security, the BHC operator HomeFirst, will have onsite staff 24/7. After the first year, the onsite staffing needs will be reassessed and adjusted accordingly.
- Resident managers – Over the first year of operation, BHC resident will be trained to assist in the management and oversight of the BHC.

Q: Who will hold the third-party vendors accountable for how the facility is run?

A: HomeFirst, the BHC operator, will be responsible for all maintenance, operations and services associated with BHC and sub-vendors such as security. The City's Housing Department will be monitoring the performance of HomeFirst and all BHC operations throughout the duration of the BHC initiative. As with all other City funded projects and services administered through the Housing Department, the agreement between the City and HomeFirst will establish project deliverables, performance goals, and overall outcomes for BHC and HomeFirst. Additionally, as will most service oriented agreements, the Housing Department will be required to report back to City Council annually on the performance of HomeFirst and the overall success of BHC.

Q: Why was the land that is in the flight path of SJC were disqualified from consideration? Is this due to zoning restrictions?

A: All of the sites that were considered for BHC are on a list that was released to the Neighborhood Commission on April 12, 2017 in attachment C. The list provides the primary reason each of the sites were qualified or disqualified for consideration.

[April 12, 2017 - AB 2176 Implementation Report](#)

The land directly adjacent to the San José International Airport was removed from consideration because it is in the airport approach zone. There are FAA restrictions prohibiting the use of these sites for any type of residential use. While AB 2176 provides relief from several local and state regulations, it does not suspend federal requirements.

Q: The D3 site looks like it is located within a flood zone. According to the FEMA flood Map, it is in the orange area of the map and has a 1% annual chance of flood.

A: While the some of the surrounding areas to the D3 site are listed as a Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA), the D3 site is not within a SFHA. The D3 site is in an "Area of Minimal Flood Hazard." There are no flood related building limitations.

Note: It is important to note that even areas that have been identified in the SFHA are not necessarily prohibited from new building. Depending on the flood designation, these areas often require flood mitigation efforts as a condition of building.