



Best Practices for Surplus & Underutilized Public Lands: Surplus Land Strategies that Support Affordable Housing (August 2019)

The following are SV@Home’s recommendations for effective local jurisdiction surplus land strategies, applicable to all jurisdictions regardless of charter city standing:

Recommendation	Rationale
Create and maintain an inventory of existing sites.	As a first step toward understanding the development opportunities available on public sites, SV@Home recommends that a public agency document the surplus sites it owns and make this inventory available to the public. As a best practice, this inventory should be included in the city’s Housing Element analysis of opportunity sites. Assembly Bill 1486 is working to address this statewide, and local jurisdictions should apply resources to track this information consistently.
Define affordable housing as a priority on surplus land by adopting a Surplus Land Resolution.¹	There are immense pressures on cities to dispose of surplus land for other priorities outside of housing. Due to the extreme demand for affordable housing in our communities, and for the capacity to deliver significant units on surplus land, it is important that affordable housing is established as a priority on these parcels.
Set affordability targets for individual sites.	State law requires that local agencies give priority to residential projects that will produce 25% affordable units public lands and require 15% of units produced on public land be affordable. Regional initiatives also create further incentives. Current discrepancies with state law put some onus on local governments

¹ San Jose Surplus Land Resolution: <https://www.sanjoseca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/57079>

	<p>to also establish their own targets to ensure affordable housing is prioritized. SV@Home recommends that public agencies adopt affordability targets for individual sites and consider the potential for a portfolio wide target of at least 25% affordable housing for low-income households.</p>
<p>Drive the timely implementation of the strategy by making necessary zoning changes and coordinate with other public agencies to encourage the use of surplus and underutilized public property for affordable housing.</p>	<p>To move from plan to implementation, local elected leaders should proactively zone surplus and underutilized property to allow high density affordable housing development. In addition to city owned land, cities should also update zoning on land owned by other agencies within their boundaries such as the county, VTA, and school districts to expedite high density affordable housing in these areas as well.</p>
<p>Offer land to affordable housing developers at a discounted rate.</p>	<p>The cost of land is a major driver of high housing prices. We encourage public entities to explore opportunities to offer land to affordable housing developers at no cost or at a discounted rate. By reducing land costs, project feasibility is increased and developers may be able to more deeply subsidize rents, enabling them to reach households at lower-income ranges.</p>