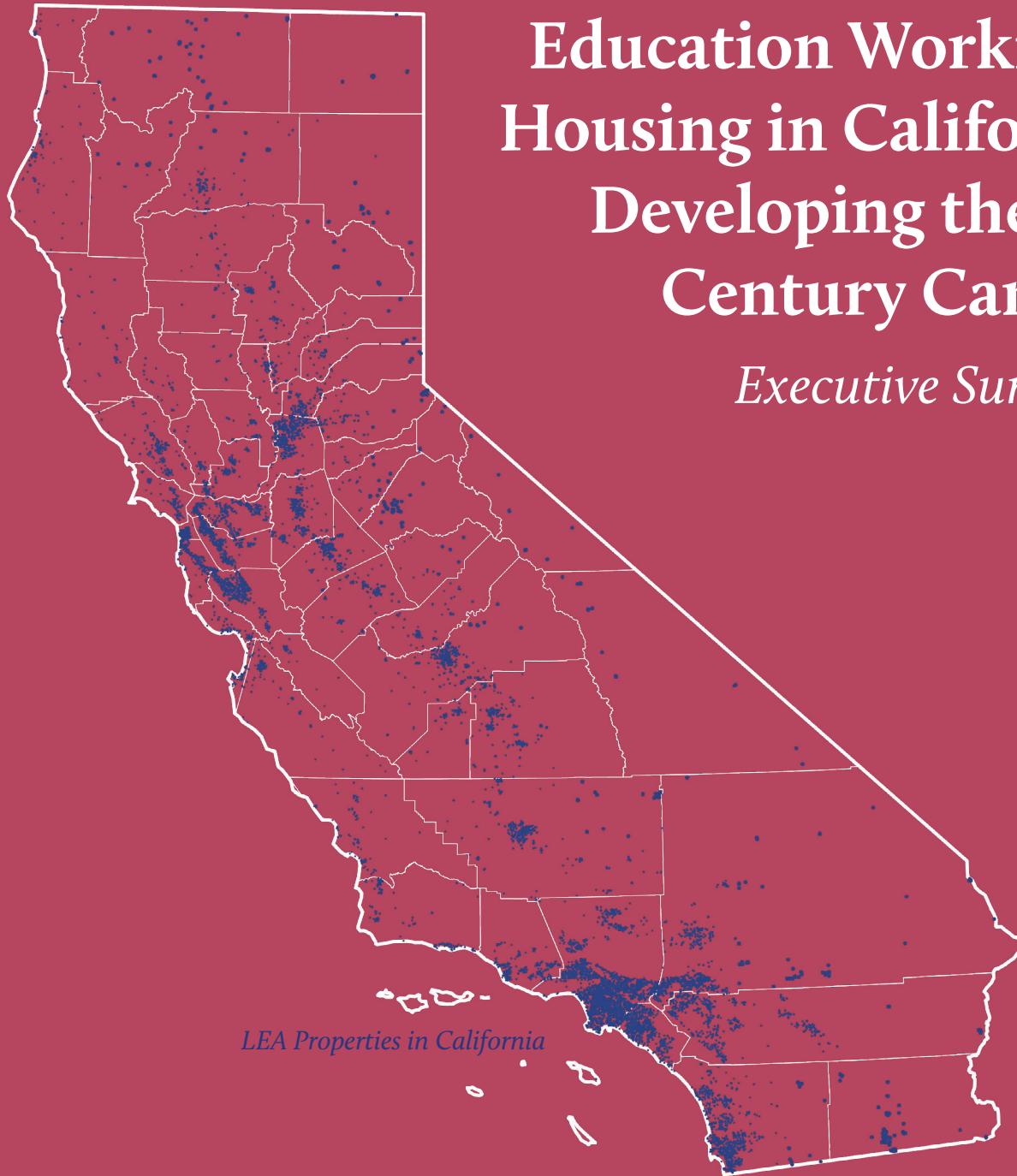


Education Workforce Housing in California: Developing the 21st Century Campus

Executive Summary



LEA Properties in California



TERNER
CENTER
FOR HOUSING
INNOVATION
UC BERKELEY

Among the many negative consequences of California's longstanding and deepening housing crisis is the toll it takes on people who work in public service jobs, especially the hundreds of thousands of teachers and other employees working in the public school system. Many of the 300,000 public school teachers cannot afford to live in the communities where they work, forcing them to commute long distances or pushing them out of the education system altogether. Attracting new teachers has also grown more challenging. Housing prices have climbed across the state, yet the majority of the nearly one thousand local educational agencies (LEAs) in California offer entry-level teacher salaries below the area median income.

Importantly, there are racial disparities embedded in these teacher staffing challenges. Teachers of color are already underrepresented among California's public educators and they are more likely to experience housing cost burdens. Staffing challenges are even more acute in LEAs enrolling low-income and historically underserved students, where they have long suffered higher rates of both teacher turnover and teachers with substandard credentials. Thus, teacher recruitment and retention challenges are disproportionately impacting already disadvantaged students in California, working against efforts to close educational equity gaps.

As housing affordability challenges intertwine with staffing challenges, more and more LEAs are considering building workforce housing on land they own. The Teacher Housing Act of 2016 authorizes California LEAs to pursue affordable housing for employees and shifts the playing field on development finance. LEAs can now address employee housing by leveraging a range of programs and fiscal resources available to other housing developers. The Act establishes that housing stability for LEA employees is "critical to the overall success and stability of each school in California." There are early indications that such efforts to build on LEA-owned land can have positive impacts on teacher attraction and retention. Santa Clara Unified School District's Casa del Maestro reduced its attrition rate by two-thirds for teachers supported by the housing development, compared with others in the same cohort, and waitlists demonstrate consistently high demand—80% of its tenants stay the full allowable rental term.

This report provides an extensive review of the need for public education workforce housing solutions, where and how such strategies can—and are—being implemented, and recommendations to advance housing solutions on LEA-owned land. Our analysis finds that:

Every County Has LEA-Owned Land Potentially Suited for Developing Workforce Housing

As community landowners, LEAs have a unique advantage in the affordable housing development process. There are more than 150,000 acres of land owned by LEAs all across California. According to our analysis, there are 7,068 properties with potentially developable land of one acre or more, totaling 75,000 acres statewide. This is about the size of five Manhattans. More than half (61%) of these properties are located where beginning teachers face housing affordability challenges. More than 40% of these properties are located in areas that are likely to be competitive for key affordable housing financing tools.

Every county in California has LEA-owned land that is potentially developable, so education workforce housing could help meet the housing needs of public education employees across the entire state. While our analysis reveals tremendous opportunity throughout California—especially in locales where LEA employees face housing affordability challenges—each property will require careful, on-the-ground assessment.

Dozens of LEAs Across the State Are Already Taking Steps to Build Workforce Housing

California is home to just four completed education workforce housing developments undertaken by two LEAs: Los Angeles Unified and Santa Clara Unified. However, it is clear that interest in pursuing workforce housing strategies is growing as more LEAs take steps to build such housing developments. Between June 2018 and November 2020, eight California LEAs put propositions or measures before local voters to fund education workforce housing development. Six of the measures passed.

Our statewide scan of LEAs finds that many more are likely to follow suit. We identified 46 LEAs pursuing projects on 83 sites that stand at various stages of completion, ranging from a public expression of interest in education workforce housing to completed and occupied developments. These LEAs face greater teacher recruitment and housing affordability challenges compared to others in the state and are leading the way.

LEAs Can Learn from Completed Developments and Partnerships to Navigate the Complex Process of Building Housing and Securing Community Buy-in

Planning, designing, and completing a workforce housing project successfully is an inherently complex process. This report synthesizes the experiences of numerous LEAs, outlining the development process from extensive information in school board meeting minutes, presentations, and design documents.

Much of what makes education workforce housing development unique occurs in the “predevelopment” stage where initial decisions about site, design, tenancy, and financing are made, and where community engagement begins. After predevelopment, subsequent phases follow relatively standard development, financing, and construction practices. Because LEAs typically do not have experience in housing development, partnership agreements are routine to connect with experienced consultants, developers, and financial professionals who provide technical expertise and guide the way. They are also important partners with LEAs on the crucial work of community engagement throughout the development process to increase chances of a project’s success.

Policymakers and LEA Leaders Can Take Concrete Steps to Advance the Development of Education Workforce Housing

Our findings illustrate the unique development potential on public K-12 education lands across California and help empower interested LEAs with guidance and tools to assess whether constructing

new homes might be the right solution for them. These findings also highlight the need for state policy action to better facilitate the development of education workforce housing.

While no one strategy will fully alleviate the state’s deeply rooted housing affordability challenges, it is clear that taking steps to improve the housing stability and affordability for teachers and other LEA staff is a crucial part. Such efforts can help address recruitment and retention challenges for LEAs as well as racial disparities in both educational quality and housing access.

What LEAs Can Do to Effectively Pursue Education Workforce Housing

- Develop partnerships with community before and throughout the process
- Prepare for a lengthy process: due diligence and project champions are key
- Design solutions must be specific to the school, the site, and the neighborhood
- Keep the process of site evaluation and selection transparent

What State Agencies and Other Partners Can Do To Help LEAs Pursue Education Workforce Housing

- Increase land use flexibility and streamline approvals process
- Expand financing tools available
- Build the capacity of LEAs

The full research report is coupled with a toolkit entitled Education Workforce Housing in California: The Handbook, both of which can be found online: <https://citylab.ucla.edu/publications>. These resources provide an understanding of how housing gets built, strategies for overcoming challenges to building such housing, and frameworks for ensuring housing meets the specific needs of each LEA and community.

Suggested citation:

Center for Cities + Schools, cityLAB, and Terner Center for Housing Innovation. (2022). Education Workforce Housing in California: Developing the 21st Century Public School Campus. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California.

1. Stage: Preliminary Exploration

1.1. First Conversations

Goals

- 1.1.1 Goal: Familiarize LEA Members with Land Development

1.2. Initial Research - Land

- 1.2.1 Goal: Survey Property Holdings
- 1.2.2 Goal: Select Potential Parcels

● · · Word of Warning

1.3. Initial Research - Survey and Financing

- 1.3.1 Goal: Survey LEA Staff
- 1.3.2 Goal: Understand the Political and Financial Landscape

1.4. Initial Community Outreach

- 1.4.1 Goal: Conduct Initial Community Conversations
- 1.4.2 Goal: Decide on Development Path
- 1.4.3 Goal: Outline Resident Population Options

● · · Potential Opportunity

● · · Word of Warning

1.5. Move Forward with Site Options

- 1.5.1 Goal: Narrow Down Site List
- 1.5.2 Goal: Issue REP for Feasibility Analysis

1-2 Years

2. Stage: Feasibility

2.1. Produce Feasibility Report

Goals

- 2.1.1 Goal: Select a Firm for Feasibility Report and Complete Analysis
- 2.1.2 Goal: Establish Core LEA Team
- 2.1.3 Goal: Present Feasibility Report to Board

2.2. Continue Community Outreach

- 2.2.1 Goal: Conduct Sustained Community Outreach

2.3. Finalize Development Plans

● · · Word of Advice

- 2.3.1 Select Site
- 2.3.2 Select Project Design
- 2.3.3 Finalize Financing Strategy

- · · Note on Efficiency
- 2.3.4 Finalize Land Agreement
- 2.3.5 Issue RFP for Development

1-1.5 Years

3. Stage: Development

3.1. Finalize Development Team

Goals

- 3.1.1. Select Developer

● · · Word of Advice

● · · Baton Pass

3.2. Complete Pre-Construction Process

- 3.2.1. Secure Entitlements
- 3.2.2. Finalize Project Design
- 3.2.3. Produce Final Documentation
- 3.2.4. Select Contractor

1-3 Years

4. Stage: Construction

4.1. Begin Construction

Goals

- 4.1.1. Break Ground
- 4.1.2. Monitor Construction Process
- 4.1.3. Establish Tenancy and Property Management Strategies

4.2. Finish Construction

2-2.5 Years

5. Stage: Leasing Up

5.1. Act on Tenancy Strategy

Goals

- 5.2. Lease Up Units

.5-1 Year

6. Stage: Management & Operations

6.1. Act on Property Management Strategy

Goals

- 6.2. Maintain the Property Through its Useable Lifetime