

Developing FEMA Housing Group Sites

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When all other housing options are exhausted, and when private sites and existing commercial sites are unable to accommodate the need for emergency transportable housing units, FEMA will coordinate with state and local officials to develop group sites.

This process is both costly and time-consuming for several reasons:

- **Location:** Land must be within reasonable distance to community-based and other wrap-around services.
- **Right of use:** Land in a suitable location must be donated by either a government entity such as the state, county or local town, or FEMA must reach a suitable leasing agreement.
- **Zoning:** Zoning codes essentially determine what types of properties—whether single-family, multi-family, condominium, or commercial—can be built on the lot. Land can be rezoned in some cases, but it takes time for approval.
- **Environmental Compliance:** FEMA must comply with all Federal laws and regulations concerning environmental and historic preservation including wetlands, wildlife protection and the protection of potentially culturally significant sites.
- **Construction:** In most cases, this will consist of horizontal development—like grading for roads, curbs and utilities – building the property from the ground up. Cost-effectiveness must be considered when deciding on whether it is productive to build a FEMA group site.
- **Permits:** Permits are required for almost any type of construction, development, or renovation. These are often regulated by the city or locality in which the area is located and could impact plans for the construction. FEMA must research the permits required for these projects, the anticipated costs and timelines of obtaining said permits. Permitting can be very time consuming.
- **Water:** Water and sanitation are two of the most important aspects when planning a raw land development. Planners need to consider if there are existing connections to water and sewage lines on the property to go from there. Local requirements are part of the process, as there are regulations around installing and operating water lines for a property.



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- **Electrical:** Planners need to consider power for the construction process as well as the units to be placed there. If there is no power to the property, local utility companies will need to start the process from scratch. Cable, phone and internet lines are also considerations for land development, although FEMA does not provide these.
- **18-Month Use:** Direct housing is meant to last 18 months from the date of the disaster declaration. Hurricane Ian's declaration date was September 29, 2022.



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