

# What Resources Can Municipalities Use to Locate Zombie Properties in Their Communities?

## Community Notifications

Calls and other messages from community members and/or leaders are often helpful, as many times, it is the neighbors of zombie properties who first detect that something is amiss.

## Notices of Foreclosure

Zombie properties often have physical notices of foreclosure placed on their premises, usually in the form of “stickers” and/or letters placed on or near the front door and/or mailbox.

## Tax Collectors and Liens

Zombie properties often have one or many liens upon them due to the failure of the abandoning mortgagee to pay property taxes. As such, these liens are often another red flag indicating that a property has become a zombie.

## Lis pendens

A “*lis pendens*,” Latin for “pending suit,” is an official, public notice that a property has a pending lawsuit or claim attached to it. *Lis pendens* often serve as red flags that a property has devolved into a “zombie” state due to being tied up in foreclosure litigation. For more information about *lis pendens*, please visit [here](#) and [here](#).

## Police and Fire Departments

Police and fire departments often deal with zombie properties due to squatting, arson, break ins and/or other miscreant behavior that vacant properties attract. As such, these departments can serve as great resource for first detecting whether a property has been abandoned.

## Title Companies

Title companies can be hired to take on the often difficult task of tracking the status of a property's title transfers.

## Utility Companies

Data on a properties usage of electricity, gas, and water is often indicative of whether a home and/or property has been vacated. This is particularly true for water usage.

## Obituaries and/or Death Certificates

Newspaper obituaries and/or county death certificates can alert officials of homes potentially abandoned by the deceased.

## Drones

Drone technology can be used as a safe way to detect the stability of the roofs of vacant properties. While the training and certification required to operate drones, plus the cost for the drone itself, may be more expensive than some of the other options on this list, in the long run, drones are usually much less expensive than the cost of demolishing or repairing a vacant property due to roof collapse.

## USPS

The United States Postal Service is often willing to collaborate with municipalities to help them identify zombie/vacated properties. These properties can tip off USPS of their vacant status in certain ways, e.g.: mail is piled up and never collected, or a forwarding address has been provided, yet no one has claimed the current address as their own.