

# Vacant Houses: Tracking Down the Owner!

By Michael Mazzella

As Real Estate Investors, we have a special affection for vacant houses. We know that somewhere, somebody is probably making payments on this vacant house, and obviously has no rental income coming in. There may be a great deal here for us. We want to make an offer on this property, if we could just get in touch with the owner.

Here are 10 ways to locate the owner of a vacant property.

1. Check the tax records at the tax assessor's office. In many parts of the country, including Oahu, you can access public tax records online. Here on Oahu, go to the tax assessor's website at <http://www.honolulupropertytax.com/>.
2. Talk to the neighbors - They know a lot! I am often surprised at the quality of information I get from neighbors. Sometimes they even have a forwarding address.
3. Leave a flyer, a hand-written note, or a yard sign at the property. Sometimes the owner, or a friend or relative, is keeping an eye the property, and stops by on occasion.
4. The US Postal Service can also help. You can send a letter to the owner at the address of the vacant property. If you write "Forwarding Service Requested" on the envelope, it will be forwarded if the owner left a forwarding address with the post office. If you write "Address correction requested, Please Do Not Forward, Return to Sender," the post office will send you the forwarding address if they are forwarding the owner's mail.
5. Call information (411).
6. Look in the county recorder's office for recorded documents in the name of the person. You may find an address for a different property they own, and perhaps live in.
7. Go on the internet and try [Whitepages.com](http://Whitepages.com) & similar online info services such as [www.searchbug.com](http://www.searchbug.com), [www.anywho.com](http://www.anywho.com), etc.
8. Do a Skip Trace, and remember that there is more than one way to spell a name. Try different variations - even if it's a common name like "Thomas," try "Tomas" or "Thom" etc. Some companies that perform skip traces are Accruint, Lexus Nexus, [findtheseller.com](http://findtheseller.com), [maralogix.com](http://maralogix.com), and others.

9. Call a Realtor - sometimes THEY know something, or can find out.
10. Hire a private investigator or bail bondsman. Because this one is more costly than the other methods, you would likely use this one last, and go forward if you think you can get a great deal on the property.

Michael Mazzella is a full-time Real Estate Investor. He also has a mentor program for RE investors. For more info, go to [www.HonoluluMentor.com](http://www.HonoluluMentor.com)

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