



**PATRIOT**  
**PROPERTY BUYER**

# **INHERITED PROPERTY CHECKLIST**

**FOR NEW JERSEY HOMEOWNERS**



A practical step-by-step guide for  
figuring out what to do next



For many families, an inherited home comes with more questions than answers. Who has authority to make decisions? Does the house need to go through probate? Who pays the bills? Should you keep it, rent it, sell it traditionally, or sell it as-is?

This checklist is designed to help you get organized, protect the property, reduce family confusion, and understand your options before making a major decision.

**Inside this guide:**

- Immediate first steps after inheriting a home
- Ownership, probate, and executor questions
- Financial items to review
- Property protection checklist
- Family and heir decision points
- Your options for keeping, renting, or selling
- Common mistakes to avoid
- When an as-is sale may make sense

# START BY SECURING THE HOME AND GETTING ORGANIZED

The first priority is protecting the property and gathering the documents needed to make informed decisions. An inherited home may be vacant, occupied, or accessible to multiple family members, so securing it early can help prevent damage, confusion, and unnecessary risk.

It is also important to locate the will, death certificate, deed, mortgage information, insurance policy, tax records, utility accounts, and any HOA or lease documents. These records help clarify who has authority, what the property costs each month, and what obligations may need to be handled before the home can be kept, rented, transferred, or sold.

Insurance should be reviewed right away. A standard homeowner policy may not properly cover a vacant inherited home. Contacting the insurance company early can help avoid coverage issues if the property is damaged.

Finally, begin tracking every expense connected to the property. Mortgage payments, taxes, utilities, insurance, lawn care, cleanout, and repairs can add up quickly. Clear records can also help reduce family tension later.

## QUICK CHECKLIST

- ☐ Secure doors, windows, garage, basement, and exterior access
- ☐ Change or rekey locks if needed
- ☐ Remove valuables and important personal documents
- ☐ Locate the will, death certificate, deed, and mortgage records
- ☐ Contact the insurance company and ask about vacancy coverage
- ☐ Start tracking all property-related expenses

# CONFIRM WHO HAS THE RIGHT TO MAKE DECISIONS

Before making major decisions, confirm how the property is legally owned and who has authority to act. Families sometimes assume they can sell, rent, clean out, or transfer a property immediately, but that is not always the case.

The deed can show whether the home was owned solely by the deceased, jointly with another person, held in a trust, or titled in another way. This matters because title affects whether probate may be required and who can legally sign documents.

If there is a will, the named executor is usually responsible for handling the estate. If there is no will, the court may appoint an administrator. In New Jersey, probate matters are commonly handled through the County Surrogate's Court.

When multiple heirs are involved, it is also important to identify everyone with an interest in the property early. One person may want to sell, another may want to keep it, and another may not be ready to decide. Knowing who is involved can make communication and decision-making easier.

## QUICK CHECKLIST

- ☐ Review the deed to confirm how the home is titled
- ☐ Determine whether the property was solely owned, jointly owned, or held in a trust
- ☐ Identify the executor named in the will or the court-appointed administrator
- ☐ Contact the County Surrogate's Court to confirm probate requirements
- ☐ Confirm whether the property can legally be sold or transferred
- ☐ Identify all heirs and interested parties

# UNDERSTAND THE COSTS ATTACHED TO THE PROPERTY

An inherited home often comes with ongoing expenses. These costs continue even while the family is deciding what to do.

Start by confirming whether there is a mortgage, home equity loan, or reverse mortgage. Missed payments can create late fees, default issues, or foreclosure risk, so it is important to know the balance, due dates, and payment status.

Property taxes also continue after the owner passes. Unpaid taxes can create liens or complicate a future sale. Utility balances, insurance costs, HOA fees, and municipal charges should also be reviewed.

It is also smart to look for liens, judgments, unpaid taxes, or other debts connected to the property. These issues can delay a sale if they are discovered too late.

Finally, take an honest look at deferred maintenance. Many inherited homes need repairs because the previous owner may not have been able to keep up with everything. Roof, HVAC, plumbing, electrical, mold, pests, code violations, and structural concerns can all affect value and timeline.

## QUICK CHECKLIST

- ☐ Confirm mortgage balance, payment status, and due dates
- ☐ Check for home equity loans or reverse mortgages
- ☐ Verify property taxes, utilities, and insurance are current
- ☐ Check HOA or condo fees, if applicable
- ☐ Look for liens, judgments, unpaid taxes, or municipal fines
- ☐ Estimate monthly carrying costs and needed repairs

# DO NOT LET THE HOME SIT WITHOUT A PLAN

Vacant homes can deteriorate quickly. Even small issues, such as a minor leak, broken window, pest problem, or overgrown lawn, can become expensive if no one is checking on the property.

Keeping insurance active is one of the most important steps. If the home is vacant, confirm that the policy still applies. The goal is to protect the estate from losses caused by fire, theft, storm damage, liability issues, or other unexpected events.

Utilities may also need to remain on. Heat can help prevent frozen pipes, electricity may support security systems or sump pumps, and basic climate control can reduce moisture problems. Shutting everything off too quickly can sometimes create bigger issues.

Families should also watch for safety hazards and code violations. Broken steps, unstable railings, water damage, trash outside, tall grass, unsecured entrances, or exterior damage can create liability, fines, and added stress.

## QUICK CHECKLIST

- ☐ Keep insurance active and confirm vacancy coverage
- ☐ Maintain heat, electricity, water, or other utilities as needed
- ☐ Check the home regularly for leaks, pests, damage, or break-ins
- ☐ Address safety issues like broken steps, railings, or electrical hazards
- ☐ Keep grass cut, exterior areas maintained, and visible debris removed
- ☐ Take photos, document maintenance issues, and save receipts

# CREATE CLEAR COMMUNICATION BEFORE PROBLEMS GROW

Inherited property decisions can become emotional. One heir may want to keep the home, another may want to sell, and another may feel overwhelmed by the process. Clear communication can help reduce misunderstandings.

If multiple people are involved, it helps to establish one primary point of contact. That person does not need to make every decision alone, but someone should be organizing documents, tracking expenses, managing updates, and helping the family stay on schedule.

Any agreements about repairs, cleanout, bills, reimbursements, selling, renting, or buyouts should be documented. This is especially important if one person is paying expenses or doing most of the work.

The family should also create a timeline. Inherited homes can sit for months while costs continue. Setting realistic deadlines for gathering documents, reviewing finances, comparing options, and making a decision can keep everyone moving forward.

## QUICK CHECKLIST

- ☐ Identify one primary point of contact
- ☐ Decide who will organize documents and track expenses
- ☐ Discuss whether heirs want to keep, rent, sell, or buy out the property
- ☐ Clarify who is paying bills and how reimbursements will work
- ☐ Assign responsibilities for maintenance, cleanout, and property checks
- ☐ Put major agreements and decision timelines in writing

# DECIDE WHETHER TO KEEP, RENT, SELL, OR SELL AS-IS

Once ownership, legal authority, costs, property condition, and family goals are clearer, it is time to compare your options.

Keeping the home may make sense if a family member wants to live there, the home has strong emotional value, or the family sees long-term upside. However, everyone should be realistic about mortgage payments, taxes, insurance, repairs, and whether all heirs agree.

Renting can create income, but it is not passive. Someone must manage tenants, repairs, leases, accounting, insurance, and property issues. The home also needs to be rental-ready.

Selling traditionally may work well if the property is in good condition and the family has time for cleanout, repairs, showings, inspections, commissions, and buyer financing.

Selling as-is may be the simpler choice if the home needs repairs, is full of belongings, has multiple heirs involved, or the family wants to avoid contractors, showings, and delays.

A buyout or temporary co-ownership can also work, but only with clear written terms, fair valuation, expense agreements, and decision deadlines.

## QUICK CHECKLIST

- ☐ Decide whether anyone wants to keep the home
- ☐ Confirm whether the family can afford ongoing costs
- ☐ Determine whether the home is rental-ready
- ☐ Estimate repairs, cleanout, and preparation costs for a traditional sale
- ☐ Compare traditional sale timeline versus as-is sale timeline
- ☐ If holding or buying out, document terms, expenses, and deadlines

# AVOID COSTLY DELAYS AND UNNECESSARY STRESS

One of the biggest mistakes families make is waiting too long. Even when the home is vacant, expenses continue. Taxes, utilities, insurance, mortgage payments, maintenance, lawn care, and repairs can add up month after month.

Another common mistake is assuming someone has authority before confirming the deed, probate status, and executor or administrator role. Legal clarity should come before major decisions.

Families should also avoid letting insurance lapse, ignoring liens or tax balances, neglecting maintenance, mixing personal and estate finances without documentation, or spending too much on repairs before comparing selling options.

The process can become especially stressful when the house needs major work, heirs live out of state, the property is vacant, there are multiple decision-makers, or the family wants to avoid cleanout, showings, contractors, and delays.

In those situations, an as-is sale may be worth considering.

## QUICK CHECKLIST

- ☐ Avoid waiting months without a plan
- ☐ Confirm legal authority before selling, renting, or transferring
- ☐ Keep insurance active and review vacancy coverage
- ☐ Check for liens, taxes, mortgages, HOA balances, and utility bills
- ☐ Track personal payments made for estate expenses
- ☐ Compare your options before making major repairs

# WANT A SIMPLER WAY TO HANDLE AN INHERITED HOUSE?

Managing an inherited property can quickly become more complicated than expected.

Patriot Property Buyer helps New Jersey families understand their options and offers a straightforward as-is selling solution for homeowners who want to avoid repairs, cleanout, agent commissions, showings, and delays.

You can request a no-obligation cash offer, choose a flexible closing date, and decide what works best for your family.



At Patriot Property Buyer, we believe every homeowner deserves a fair, honest, and stress-free way to sell their home. Founded on the values of service, integrity, and community, we help New Jersey families achieve freedom from problem properties with fast, all-cash offers.

Rooted in military discipline and family values, we're proud to stand as a veteran-owned business that treats every homeowner like a neighbor, not a number.

We Promise to Treat You with Fairness, Respect, and Empathy. We Prioritize Your Needs & Work to Provide Solutions That Truly Benefit YOU.



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