

Tackling the interconnected issues of heirs property and vacant homes

Vacant homes can create a cycle of economic decline that depresses property values, limits economic activity, and contributes to the physical disrepair of homes. JPMorganChase is sharing lessons learned from our multi-faceted approach leveraging the public and private sectors, philanthropy, and community partners to help advance place-based neighborhood development strategies and drive inclusive economic growth.

Challenges in the transfer of titles can contribute to disrepair and vacancy, with broader consequences for neighborhood stability and inclusive development. Heirs property, also known as a “tangled title,” occurs when a property owner dies without a will and several people gain rights to indivisible shares in the same land or structure. It is one of the most insecure and unstable forms of real property ownership and places families at an increased risk of property loss due to land speculation, property partition sales, or tax default.

Homeowners without clear titles—such as those experiencing heirs property cases—are unable to unlock home equity in order to make needed repairs or cover expenses. Additionally, heirs property owners may be unable to access and benefit from important government assistance programs, such as home repair, property tax reduction, and disaster recovery programs. Without access to much-needed assistance, **heirs properties become increasingly susceptible to vacancy, abandonment, and disrepair.**

Why Heirs Property?

JPMorganChase is dedicated to ensuring that all homeowners can fully enjoy the benefits of homeownership, including the ability to build and pass on wealth to their families. Many families rely on home equity to create a financial safety net, cover educational costs, or start a business. However, these benefits are often out of reach for those caught in heirs property cases. Heirs property can undermine the creation and preservation of generational wealth and is disproportionately found in Black, Latino, Hispanic, low-income, and low-wealth families in both rural and urban communities. It largely stems from oversights in estate planning, insufficient access to affordable legal services, and a knowledge gap in how property transfers from generation to generation.

Note: The metrics in this paper are derived from a variety of public and private sources, including data that were self-reported by JPMorganChase grant recipients. JPMorganChase has not independently verified these data and makes no representation or warranty as to the quality, completeness, accuracy or fitness for a particular purpose. The metrics as reported are not directly tied to funds or other support provided by JPMorganChase but rather are a result of a variety of factors.

As part of JPMorganChase's strategy to build and preserve generational wealth through homeownership, the firm is supporting efforts to resolve and prevent heirs property, including by:

Seeding and accelerating scalable solutions through our philanthropic capital, which has supported:

- **Catapult Greater Pittsburgh** (\$3 million committed in 2023) to help stabilize Pittsburgh's neighborhoods by providing access to home repairs, title clearance, and estate planning services to homeowners without a clear title in their name, as well as by acquiring and rehabilitating vacant or abandoned properties.
- **Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) Jacksonville** (\$500,000 committed in 2023) to address the systemic barriers that contribute to heirs property, including through resident outreach and education, title resolution and estate planning legal services, equitable property valuation methods, and increased access to home repair and property tax relief programs.
- **Howard University** (\$500,000 committed in 2023) to establish an estate planning and heirs property legal clinic, where law students gain experience to become estate planning and heirs property attorneys by serving clients in the Washington, D.C. area.

Supporting federal, state and local policies that preserve homeownership and facilitate the transfer of generational wealth, such as:

- The **Uniform Partition of Heirs Property Act (UPHPA)**, which provides critical due process protections for families at risk of losing their home from a third party purchasing a co-owner's share of a property and subsequently forcing a partition sale.
- **Transfer-on-Death-Deeds (TODDs)**, which offer a simpler and more affordable alternative to the costly and time-intensive probate process.
- The **Heirs' Estate Inheritance Resolution and Succession (HEIRS) Act of 2024**, which would establish a new grant program at the Department of Housing and Urban Development to support individuals experiencing heirs property with key financial and technical assistance.

Contributing insights from our research, policy, and philanthropic and business expertise to advance evidence-based solutions, including publishing:

- **Preserving generational wealth by untangling titles for heirs property owners (2023)**
- **Supporting heirs property owners through natural disaster and resiliency programs (2024)**
- **Tackling persistent residential vacancy, abandonment, & disrepair (2024)**



Learn more in at
[jpmorganchase.com/
heirs-property](https://jpmorganchase.com/heirs-property).

