

Inherited Home Decision Guide


Clear steps to protect your equity, avoid costly mistakes,
and move forward with confidence.

Guiding families through inherited home decisions
across Ventura & Los Angeles County



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Before You Make Any Decisions

Inheriting a home can bring a mix of emotions. For many families, it represents memories, love, and decades of life experiences. At the same time, it can also bring uncertainty, questions, and decisions no one feels fully prepared to make.

Many people worry about making the wrong decision, moving too fast, or overlooking something important.

The most important thing to know is this: you have options, and you have time to make the right decisions.

This guide was created to help families like yours understand the key steps to take, the questions to ask, and how to move forward with clarity and confidence.

The goal is simple:

To help you protect your family's interests while minimizing stress along the way.

Inherited homes are not just assets —
they're memories. This matters.

Step 1: Confirm Legal Authority

Before any decisions can be made, it's important to understand who has the legal authority to act on behalf of the property.



- Is the property held in a trust, probate, or already titled in someone's name?
- Who is the executor or trustee?
- Has the death certificate been issued?
- Has probate been opened, or is it being avoided through a trust?
- Are there multiple heirs, and do they all agree on next steps?
- Has an attorney been consulted yet?
- Are there any deadlines or court timelines we should be aware of?

Many families try to move forward before they legally can. Clarifying this step early provides a solid foundation for everything that follows.

Step 2: Understand the Financial Responsibilities

Inherited homes often come with ongoing financial obligations. Knowing who is responsible and what is owed helps families avoid pressure and make thoughtful decisions.

- Is there an existing mortgage?
- Are payments current, or is the home in default?
- Are there HELOCs, liens, or judgments on title?
- Are property taxes current?
- Is there homeowners insurance in place?
- Who is currently paying the ongoing expenses?



These costs can add up quickly. Understanding them early helps you plan wisely and prevents financial surprises later.

Step 3: Review Occupancy and Access

Who is living in the home can affect timelines, preparation, and legal considerations.

- Is the home vacant or occupied?
- If occupied, who lives there (heir, tenant, family member)?
- Are there tenants or rental agreements in place?
- Who has keys and legal access to the property?
- Is the property secure and being maintained?

Occupancy situations are very common and manageable. Knowing who has access and responsibility helps prevent misunderstandings and keeps everyone on the same page.



Step 4: Assess the Property's Condition

The condition of the home helps determine value, preparation needs, and the best path forward.

- When was the home last updated?
- Are there known repair or maintenance issues?
- Any roof, plumbing, electrical, or foundation concerns?
- Has there been water damage or mold?
- Are personal belongings still inside the home?
- Has the home been vacant for an extended period?
- Does the home need cleaning, repairs, or preparation?
- Has the property been professionally inspected?



Many inherited homes have not been updated recently. This is very common and completely manageable.

Understanding the condition of the property helps you make informed decisions and choose the approach that best fits your family's goals, timeline, and comfort level.

Step 5: Clarify Family Goals



Before moving forward, it's important to understand what everyone hopes will happen with the home. Alignment reduces tension and prevents rushed decisions.

- Does the family plan to sell, keep, rent, or decide later?
- Are all heirs aligned on the preferred outcome?
- Is there pressure to sell quickly?
- Do proceeds need to cover estate expenses or distributions?

There is no single “right” decision. Taking time to clarify goals ensures choices feel thoughtful and respectful to everyone involved.

Step 6: Consider Timing and Urgency

Some situations allow time to plan carefully, while others require quicker action. Understanding urgency helps set realistic expectations.

- Has a CPA been consulted?
- Do you understand step-up in basis?
- Are there potential capital gains considerations?
- Has property tax reassessment been discussed?
- Is ownership being transferred to an heir instead of selling?

Knowing your timeline helps reduce overwhelm and allows you to move forward at a pace that feels manageable.



Step 7: Review Tax Planning, Capital Gains & Proposition 19 (California)

Inherited property often comes with important tax considerations that can significantly affect your financial outcome. While professional guidance from a CPA or tax advisor is essential, having a general understanding helps families avoid costly surprises and make informed decisions.

- Have you spoken with a CPA or qualified tax professional?
- Do you understand how the step-up in basis works for inherited property?
- Have potential capital gains taxes been discussed if the home is sold?
- Has Proposition 19 property tax reassessment been reviewed?
- If an heir plans to keep the home, do they qualify for any Prop 19 exclusions?
- Have you reviewed how ownership transfers may affect future property taxes?

Tax rules surrounding inherited property can significantly affect financial outcomes. Getting the right guidance helps protect your family's equity.

Proposition 19 is a California property tax law that can change how much heirs pay in property taxes after inheriting a home.

In many cases, when a property transfers from parent to child:

- The home may be reassessed at today's market value
- This can significantly increase annual property taxes
- Some exclusions may apply if an heir moves into the home as their primary residence
- Qualification rules and timing are very important

Because property taxes continue every year, Proposition 19 can be one of the most important financial factors when deciding whether to keep or sell an inherited home. Reviewing this early helps families avoid unexpected tax increases.



Understanding Capital Gains Tax — What It Means for Inherited Homes

Capital gains tax applies to profit made when a property is sold.

With inherited property, heirs typically receive a step-up in basis, which means the property's value is adjusted to its market value at the time of inheritance.

This can significantly reduce the amount of taxable gain.

- Selling soon after inheriting may result in little to no capital gains tax
- Keeping the home long-term can change the tax picture
- Converting the home to a rental may create additional tax considerations

Understanding this early helps families make decisions that protect equity and avoid surprises.

Easy to Understand Example Scenario

Original purchase price (years ago):

\$150,000

Value at time of inheritance: \$850,000

Sold shortly after inheritance: \$860,000

Because of the step-up in basis:

Taxable gain may only apply to the \$10,000 increase – not the full increase from \$150,000 to \$860,000.

That difference can save families tens of thousands of dollars.



Step 8: Acknowledge Family and Emotional Considerations



Inherited homes involve memories, relationships, and emotions – not just finances.

- How is everyone feeling about handling the property?
- Are there disagreements between heirs?
- Has anything been promised informally to family members?
- Are emotions affecting decision-making or timelines?

These situations are deeply personal. Making space for emotions and communication helps protect family relationships during a difficult time. Taking time to communicate openly can protect family relationships and make the process feel more supportive for everyone.

Step 9: Identify Support and Next Steps

You don't have to handle everything alone. Having the right support can make this process much lighter.

- Would a property value range help with decision-making?
- Would it help to compare selling options side-by-side?
- Is estate sale or decluttering assistance needed?
- Are cleaning, repairs, or pre-sale preparation services needed?
- Would legal or tax professional referrals help?
- Would a family meeting help everyone feel aligned?

The right guidance and resources can turn an overwhelming situation into a manageable plan.

Dear Friend,

If you're reading this, you or someone you care about is facing an important moment. Handling an inherited home is rarely just a financial decision. It is deeply personal. There are memories in the walls, family stories in every room, and emotions that don't fit neatly into paperwork or timelines.

I've walked alongside many families during this season of life, and I understand how overwhelming it can feel. The legal steps, financial questions, property decisions, and family dynamics can all come at once – especially during a time when you're already processing change.

Please know this: you don't have to figure everything out at once, and you don't have to do it alone.

With the right guidance, you can avoid costly mistakes, reduce unnecessary stress, and move forward with clarity and confidence. Whether your path leads to selling the home, keeping it in the family, renting it out, or simply taking time to decide, what matters most is making the choice that feels right for your family.

There is no pressure. No rush. Just thoughtful planning and supportive guidance when you're ready.

If it would help to talk through your situation, review your options, or simply understand the current value of the home, I'm here for you. That conversation is available whenever you feel ready to have it.

Warmly,

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