

BUDGET & PUBLIC SPENDING

2025-2027

MISSION & PURPOSE

Center for Heirs' Property® (CHP) empowers under-resourced families to safeguard their land and homes for generations to come. Working in deep relationship with landowners, we provide legal support and financial education, and help them grow working landscapes that sustain generational wealth. Heirs' property, also known as family land, is a form of property ownership created when an owner passes away without a will and/or if the property remains in a deceased person's name. Heirs' property owners are often held back—not by lack of care or vision, but by legal barriers that have built up over generations. When families have free and clear titles, they can make informed decisions, access opportunities, and put their land to work—preserving legacy, building generational wealth, and strengthening the communities they call home. CHP supports policies that remove those barriers by clarifying and securing ownership.

As a national leader in providing solutions-oriented support to heirs' property owners, CHP seeks to engage impacted community members, prospective institutional partners, and elected officials in the promotion of heirs' property owner-responsive, research-based policy solutions for the urgent challenges these home and land owners face.

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CHP supports public spending decisions that improve heirs' property owners' access to critical services.

CASE EXAMPLE

Mrs. Evangeline Whittaker* and her siblings inherited 150 acres of forestland from their late father, Mr. Ernest Whittaker, who died in 1987 without a will. Her siblings live in other states and do not have the time or financial resources to help her with the forest management. Although she is on a fixed income, she maintains the fencing, pays the annual taxes, and pays for clean up following major storms.

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**No actual client names are used in this example.*

One of her neighbors, Mr. Wilford Jennings, told Mrs. Whittaker that he and his wife lease their forestland to a hunting club every year to earn an income from their forestland. Mrs. Whittaker has always wanted to do something similar with her family's forest, but she worries that her siblings will not agree to anything that might require them to invest time or money. Over the years, two of her siblings have expressed a preference to sell the land and split the proceeds of the sale. The others have told her to "do whatever she wants."

Without educational, forest management, and legal services, Mrs. Whittaker is not able to make this forest an asset for her family or an accessible natural resource to her community for recreational and other purposes. The services provided by organizations like CHP play a critical role in transforming inherited land into family wealth and community assets.

The True Cost of Underinvestment

Heirs' property owners and the communities they call home have never truly benefitted from the real value of their homes, forest and farmland. Unfortunately, we have all inherited this unfair reality together because none of our communities have sufficiently invested in the critical services heirs' property owners need so they can clear their title and fully participate in the rights and opportunities of property ownership. By underinvesting in heirs' property services, our communities have undermined the full property value of

thousands of acres of forest and farmland and thousands of homes which has community-wide impacts beyond the individual heirs' property owners.

Impacts of Investment

Through no fault of their own, these owners inherited property that is extremely legally complicated. Solutions-oriented services can help heirs' property owners learn how to financially manage a forest, farm, or home, participate in government programs to make their land support their regional environment, and avoid the burden on our legal systems created when owners are forced to share property management decision-making with multiple co-owners.

Public Investments in Heirs Property Services Strengthen Entire Ecosystems & Economies

Public investments that help heirs' property owners access solutions-oriented services, helps these families fully realize the full value of their property and allows their community to benefit from the resulting increased property values. These investments not only preserve family wealth, they strengthen regional ecosystems and economies.

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