



GEORGIA HEIRS PROPERTY  
LAW CENTER

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Quarterly Update, August 14, 2019

Heirs property is the hidden story behind blight and generational poverty throughout Georgia. In 2017, USDA Forest Service and UGA Carl Vinson researchers identified probable heirs property in 10 non-metro Georgia counties with a total tax appraised value of over two billion dollars (\$2,148,951,361), equity that can't be used. If heirs property in 10 counties represents over \$2 billion in locked equity, the total tax appraised value of probable heirs property undermining Georgia's economy is over **\$34 billion**.

The Georgia Heirs Property Law Center, Inc. ("the Center") increases generational wealth, social justice, and community stability by securing and preserving property rights. Since 2015, the Center has provided legal representation and closed **330** matters. The Center has conducted **8** wills clinics and completed **148** estate plans for clients. The Center has completed **307** community outreach programs, trainings and stakeholder meetings in **45** counties and provided information and educational materials to over **10,500** individuals. Today, the Center has **141 open** title clearing and estate planning matters involving properties in **46** counties with a total tax assessed value of **\$12.44 million**.

The Center's average client is **65 years old**, has an annual household income of **\$29,035**, and has property with a tax assessed value of **\$90,004.00**.

Client Stories:

Mr. and Mrs. Carole\* had promised their home to Tim,\* one of their 7 children; however, neither conveyed the home to Tim nor had last wills and testaments. The Center represented Tim and were able to obtain unanimous consent from all heirs, file the petitions in the Probate Court, and file orders, one from each parent's estate, in the land records in Ben Hill County. During this process, a title search of the home, showed that although Tim's parents had purchased it at a tax sale in the 1980s, they did not have marketable title. The Center is working to foreclose the right of redemption and quiet title in order to obtain marketable title for Tim.

Mrs. Zimmerman\* purchased a family home with her husband in Clayton County as joint tenants with rights of survivorship. Subsequently, during a refinance, they titled the home solely in Mrs. Zimmerman's husband's name. Five months before the maturity of the mortgage, Mr. Zimmerman passed away without a will. Mrs. Zimmerman assumed she was the sole owner of the home since Mr. and Mrs. Zimmerman had no children together; however, she discovered that she actually owned the home with her four stepchildren when the mortgage company stopped communicating with her. With the Center's legal help, Mrs. Zimmerman obtained appointment as temporary administrator of her husband's estate so that the mortgage servicer would communicate with her and, through a petition for a year's support, secured title to the home, which she was able to pay off and sell for \$120,000, and has reimbursed the Center for expenses incurred during her representation.

\*Name has been changed to protect client confidentiality.



**GEORGIA HEIRS PROPERTY  
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Georgia Heirs Property Law Center is a not-for-profit law firm that helps heirs property owners, nonprofits, and municipalities remediate fractured title, increase equity and transfer wealth to the next generation through title clearing, wills creation, estate planning and facilitating access to government, private sector, and nonprofit land management and home improvement programs.

# Building Generational Wealth and Strengthening Communities by Securing and Preserving Property Rights.

## WHAT WE DO



### LEGAL SUPPORT

Georgia Heirs Property Law Center provides legal support for families, individuals, nonprofits and municipalities. Title-clearing services include title audits, family mediations, and legal tools like management agreements; powers of attorneys; consolidation of title into single ownership, LLC, or trust; or litigation).



### PREVENTION

In an effort to slow down land loss and secure property assets, Georgia Heirs Property Law Center develops estate plans and prepares last wills and testaments for individuals. In addition, the Center provides educational materials for nonprofits through its Estate Forms Project.



### ASSET EDUCATION

Georgia Heirs Property Law Center provides financial education on home and land ownership to grow assets for the next generation. The Center engages nonprofit and governmental partners to help clients develop land/timber management plans, qualify for USDA programs, and access home repair, Disaster Recovery and Resilience programs.

## WHO WE ARE



Center attorneys, support staff, and a network of pro bono volunteers and grassroots organizational partners



Statewide work with geographic outreach in Atlanta and South Georgia



Offices in Atlanta, Athens, Fitzgerald, and Valdosta.



Serving low and moderate income families with properties in 46 Georgia counties with a collective value of more than \$14.1 million

**Heirs Property is the hidden story behind blight and generational poverty in Georgia.**

Heirs property refers to a home or land that passes from generation to generation without a legally designated owner resulting in ownership divided among all living descendants in a family. This unstable form of ownership limits a family's ability to build generational wealth and hampers the efforts of nonprofits and cities to revitalize neighborhoods.

## CONTACT US

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