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HEIRS' PROPERTY PREVALENCE STUDY

Where Concentration Meets Vulnerability:

A Neighborhood-Scale Analysis for Camden County, New Jersey

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Central Finding

When heirs' property is concentrated in a neighborhood, it correlates strongly with other negative conditions, like higher vacancy and lower home values. That's a correlation, not necessarily a cause. In Camden County, that concentration point is about 6% of single-family residential parcels.

3,843
Probable Heirs' Properties Identified

$443.5M
Assessed Value at Risk Across Probable Heirs' Properties

18 Census Tracts
with ≥6% Prevalence Exhibiting Distinct Vulnerability Patterns

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Heirs' property—land or housing held through inherited ownership without clear, recorded title—remains a significant but unevenly distributed source of housing instability and wealth vulnerability in the United States. While national studies have established the broad scale of heirs' property, they offer limited guidance for local prioritization, intervention design, or alignment with neighborhood housing conditions.

This study advances heirs' property analysis by integrating parcel-level administrative screening with tract-level value context and neighborhood risk–capacity assessment to identify where heirs' property functions as a meaningful indicator of housing vulnerability rather than a diffuse background condition.

Using Camden County, New Jersey, as a case study, parcels likely to be heirs' property are identified through a conservative, tiered classification framework grounded in ownership indicators and converging tenure, mailing, and vacancy signals. Parcel-level results are aggregated to census tracts to estimate prevalence, examine residential value context, and assess alignment with neighborhood housing pressure and capacity typologies using the NEXUS™ framework.

KEY FINDINGS

Concentration is the critical signal. Heirs' property prevalence is uneven across census tracts. Below approximately 6% of single-family residential parcels,[1] heirs' property does not consistently align with elevated housing risk or broader neighborhood pressure. Above this level, higher prevalence repeatedly coincides with lower residential value contexts, higher vacancy, weaker capacity indicators, and higher overall pressure classifications.

High-prevalence census tracts are qualitatively different. The 18 tracts with ≥6% prevalence of heirs' property exhibit median vacancy of 17% (vs. 1.6% countywide), investor ownership of 17.6% (vs. 3.9%), median property values of $111,000 (vs. $242,000), and median household income of $45,000 (vs. $91,000).

Heirs' property functions as an amplifying condition. NEXUS™ results show that a higher prevalence of heirs' property contributes to composite risk when layered onto other pressure indicators—particularly vacancy and investor ownership—but does not produce elevated risk classifications on its own.

Spatial concentration is tight. Critical and High Pressure tracts are concentrated in a compact northwest cluster, where multiple risk indicators coincide with weak protective capacity. This geography maps onto the county's most acute housing vulnerability.

Investment Context

A prospective Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis conducted by AFN for Camden County estimates that resolving a single heirs' property case can generate between $17,103 and $318,028 in societal value depending on the outcome, at an average intervention cost of $8,051 per case.[2] The highest-return scenarios—particularly avoided foreclosure, at $40 per dollar invested—are most likely to materialize in precisely the high-pressure neighborhoods this analysis identifies.

Bottom Line This analysis helps identify neighborhoods where heirs' property concentration signals broader distress, so resources can be directed where they will do the most good, for individual families and for neighborhood stability.

WHAT IS HEIRS' PROPERTY?

Heirs' property is a legal and administrative condition in which land or housing is inherited or shared among multiple parties without clear, recorded title, often because formal estate administration or deed transfer has not occurred.[3]

When an owner dies without a will, without an estate plan, or with a will that is not probated, legal ownership of the property may be passed to multiple heirs by default while still recorded in the decedent's name, creating a "clouded" or "tangled" title. The result is shared ownership: each heir has an undivided interest in the property but no legally defined rights to specific portions of the property. Since the heirs may not be listed on the property deed, they can face challenges in retaining, managing, improving, utilizing, or transferring the property.[4]

GENERATIONAL FRACTIONATION

With each generation, ownership shares divide further—from 100% to 50% to 25% to 12.5%, with just two children in each generation—increasing coordination complexity and the risk of unclear title. Heirs' property is a subset of "tangled title" in which ownership has passed through inheritance without probate and multiple parties hold legal interest.[5]

WHY IT MATTERS

For individual families, heirs' property creates barriers to accessing home repair financing, property tax relief, utility assistance, and disaster recovery programs. It also increases vulnerability to partition sales, tax foreclosure, and predatory acquisition.[6]

For neighborhoods, concentrated heirs' property can contribute to property abandonment, blighted buildings, deferred maintenance, and ineligibility for investment—conditions that compound when multiple affected parcels cluster in the same geography.[7]

For communities, high concentrations of heirs' property have been linked to neighborhood deterioration, gentrification pressure, and economic disinvestment. Mitigating heirs' property can generate significant positive externalities, including reduced displacement, strengthened conditions for inclusive development, and long-term regional resilience.[8]

WHO IS AFFECTED

While the complexities associated with heirs' properties can impact anyone, people of color tend to be disproportionately affected by heirs' property issues, in part because they are more likely to die without a will, making their assets more prone to becoming heirs' property. Historical patterns of discrimination have also made it difficult for people of color to be aware of or access trusted legal services. Low-income families are disproportionately affected because they may lack resources to hire legal representation or address property tax, maintenance, or other issues.[9]

Current estimates suggest that the total value of heirs' property in the United States may reach $243 billion.[10] In Camden County alone, the 3,843 parcels identified in this analysis carry an estimated $443.5 million in assessed value, with 99% of that total concentrated in improved residential property rather than undeveloped land.

METHODOLOGY

This study estimates the prevalence, value context, and neighborhood-scale implications of likely heirs' property in Camden County using a parcel-level screening and aggregation approach integrated with a tract-level neighborhood risk and capacity framework (NEXUS™).

ANALYTIC PREMISE

A central premise of this analysis is that heirs' property affects communities differently when dispersed versus when it is spatially concentrated. The methodology therefore focuses not only on identifying likely heirs' properties, but also on evaluating tract-level concentration, value context, and alignment with neighborhood housing conditions. This allows heirs' property to be interpreted as a background ownership condition in some places and as a neighborhood-scale vulnerability signal in others.

THREE LINKED COMPONENTS

1. Parcel-level identification of likely heirs' property using a tiered classification framework based on ownership indicators, tenure, mailing patterns, and vacancy.

2. Tract-level prevalence and value-context analysis, including suppression metrics that compare heirs' property values to surrounding parcels and county norms.

3. Neighborhood-scale contextualization using the NEXUS™ framework to assess housing risk, protective capacity, and net pressure.

RESIDENTIAL SCOPE AND DATA SOURCES

The analysis is restricted to residentially relevant parcels: improved residential parcels (Use Code 2, including single-family homes and properties with up to four units) and vacant residential land parcels (Use Code 1). Corporate/institutional ownership and life estate indicators are excluded to reduce false positives.

Parcel ownership and assessment data are drawn from Camden County tax assessment and Board of Taxation records. Recorded deed and sale history from the Camden County Recorder's Office establishes ownership tenure. USPS vacancy indicators provide supplemental signals for improved residential parcels. Parcel geometry and standardized identifiers are sourced from Regrid. Census and ACS data provide neighborhood context for tract-level interpretation.[11]

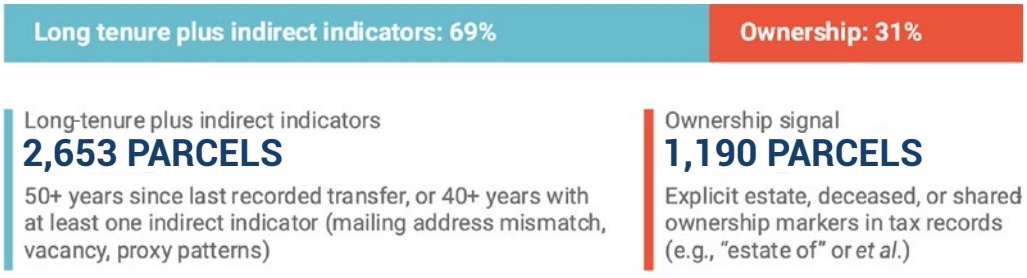
CLASSIFICATION FRAMEWORK

The likelihood of heirs' property is assessed using a two-path classification framework that produces four likelihood categories.

Classification	Criteria
Probable (Ownership)	Explicit estate, deceased, or shared ownership markers in tax records (e.g., "Estate of," multiparty ownership notations). These are administratively strong signals.
Probable (Long Tenure)	50+ years since last recorded transfer, OR 40+ years with at least one indirect indicator (mailing mismatch, vacancy, proxy ownership patterns).
Possible (Factors)	Indirect signals present (mailing mismatch, moderate tenure, vacancy) but evidentiary strength does not reach Probable threshold; these properties are excluded from downstream analyses.
Low Likelihood	Limited or weak evidence; retained for monitoring but excluded from downstream analyses.

Table 1. Classification framework for assessing the likelihood of heirs' property. All downstream prevalence reporting, mapping, and value-based analyses are restricted to "Probable" classifications only. This conservative approach prioritizes confidence over completeness.

Across the 3,843 Probable parcels, 69% qualify via the long-tenure path and 31% via direct ownership indicators.



RESULTS

SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION

Across Camden County, 3,843 parcels are classified as probable heirs' properties. Of these, 3,292 (86%) are improved residential (existing housing stock) and 551 (14%) are unimproved residential (vacant land without a structure). Of the improved residential parcels classified as probable heirs' properties, 229 carry an active vacancy flag, bringing the total footprint of probable heirs' properties with any vacancy signal to 780 parcels. Combined assessed value for vacant-signal parcels across both use types is approximately $32.8 million, with the vacant improved subset accounting for the majority of that total.

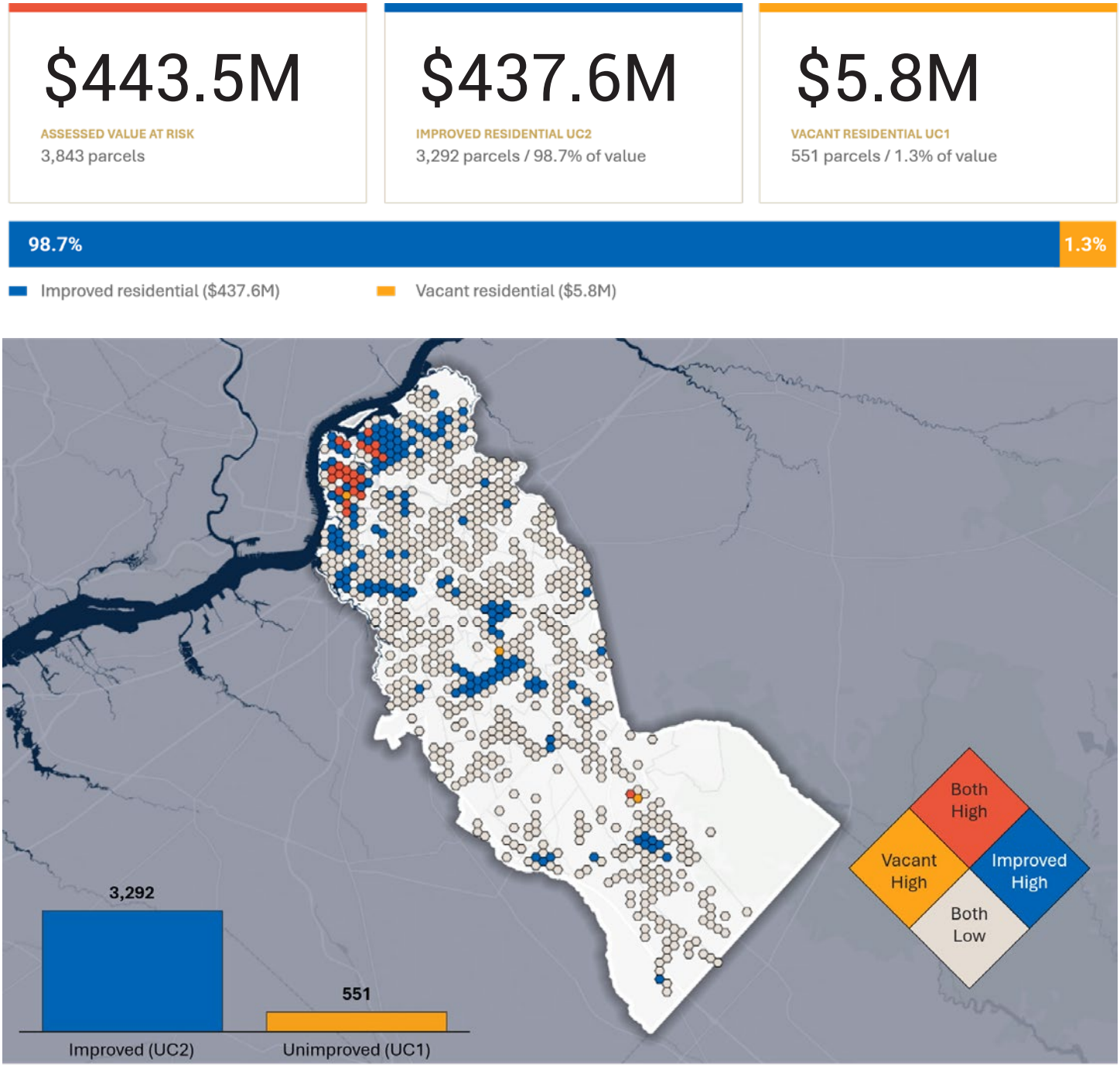


Figure 1. Countywide distribution of probable heirs' properties by residential use class. The hexbin visualization aggregates parcel-level data to show concentration patterns. Improved residential (3,292 parcels) dominate, with vacant residential (551 parcels) forming distinct clusters.

Countywide mapping shows a non-uniform distribution of probable heirs' properties with clear variation in density, clustering, and composition. Improved residential heirs' properties are broadly distributed across municipalities and census tracts, appearing in both clustered and dispersed patterns. Vacant residential heirs' properties are more spatially concentrated, occurring in discrete clusters primarily in the northwest.

Classification	Use Type	Count	% of Category
Probable HPs	Improved Residential	3,292	86%
Probable HPs	Vacant Residential	551	14%
Possible HPs	Improved Residential	2,143	57%
Possible HPs	Vacant Residential	1,640	43%
Low Likelihood	Improved Residential	25,163	89%
Low Likelihood	Vacant Residential	3,210	11%

Table 2. Parcel counts by heirs' property classification and residential use type. Only probable parcels are included in downstream analyses.

Ownership Tenure Context

Parcel-level ownership tenure confirms that probable heirs' properties are held substantially longer than the broader housing stock.

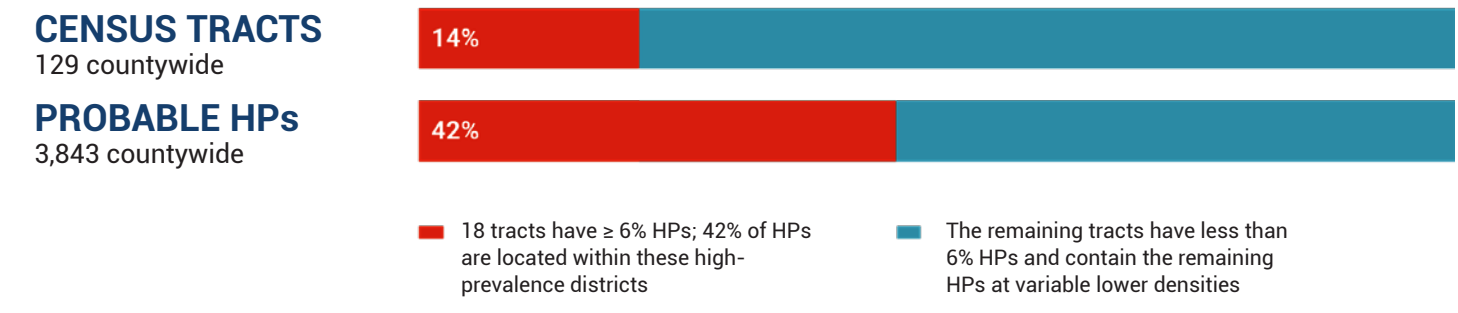
Classification	Median Tenure	% ≥ 25 yrs	% ≥ 40 yrs
Improved Residential (all)	11 yrs	20%	4.6%
Vacant Residential (all)	26 yrs	51%	22%
Probable Heirs' Properties – Improved	50 yrs	85%	78%
Probable Heirs' Properties – Vacant and Undeveloped	54 yrs	94%	88%

Table 3. Parcel-level ownership tenure by category. Probable heirs' properties show median tenure 4–5 times longer than the general housing stock.

THE 6% THRESHOLD

Concentration, not presence, determines where heirs' property becomes a neighborhood-scale vulnerability signal.

Although the 3,843 probable heirs' properties are distributed across 129 tracts countywide, they are not distributed evenly; 42% of the probable heirs' property footprint (1,606 parcels) sits within the 18 tracts at or above 6% prevalence.



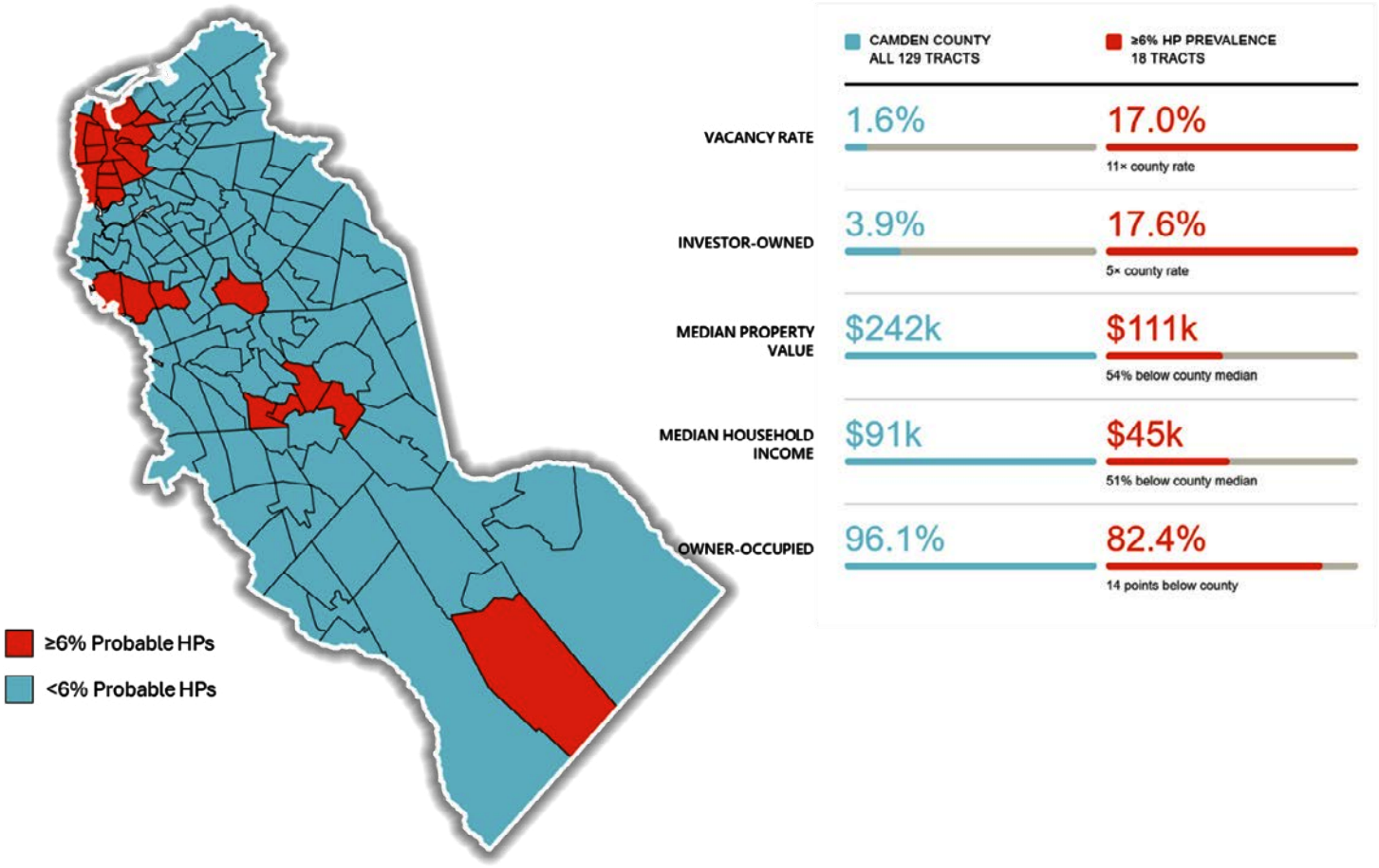


Figure 2. Heirs' property prevalence and neighborhood conditions. Red tracts have ≥6% prevalence of heirs' property. The side panel shows how these 18 tracts differ from county averages across key indicators.

When neighborhood characteristics are examined by prevalence band, a pronounced step-change emerges, particularly above the 6% threshold. Tracts are grouped into 0%, >0–1%, 1–3%, 3–6%, and ≥6% prevalence bands; 6% is the threshold above which neighborhood characteristics shift sharply, while bands below it serve as descriptive groupings for comparison.

HP Band	No. Tracts	Investor-Owned	Vacancy	Median Value	Median Income	Owner-Occupied
0%	6	3.3%	1.4%	$255K	$90k	96.7%
>0–1%	48	3.5%	1.3%	$275K	$101k	96.5%
1–3%	36	3.8%	1.1%	$277K	$99k	96.2%
3–6%	21	5.0%	1.7%	$223K	$80k	95.0%
≥6%	**18**	**17.6%**	**17.0%**	**$111K**	**$45k**	**82.4%**
County	129	3.9%	1.6%	$242K	$91k	96.1%

Table 4. Median neighborhood characteristics by heirs' property prevalence band.

Interpreting the Threshold

Vacancy and investor ownership increase sharply. Tracts with 0–3% prevalence show median vacancy of 1.1–1.4% and investor ownership of 3.3–3.8%. In the ≥6% band, both metrics exceed 17%—more than 5x higher.

Property values and incomes decline substantially. Median property values in the ≥6% band ($111,000) are less than half the countywide median. Median household income drops sharply in high-prevalence tracts, from ~$100,000 to $45,000.

Racial composition shifts.[12] In the highest-concentration band (≥6%), Black and Hispanic residents each represent approximately 39% of tract residents, nearly equal shares, and together accounting for roughly three-quarters of the population in Camden's most HP-affected neighborhoods. White residents represent 24% in that same band, compared to 70% in tracts with no detected HP. This pattern suggests that heirs' property concentration in Camden is a shared challenge for both Black and Hispanic communities at nearly equal scale.

Important: This 6% threshold reflects Camden County's specific conditions. Jurisdictions with different baseline prevalence, market structure, or urban/suburban composition may exhibit different threshold effects. The framework is transferable; specific thresholds require local calibration.

SIDEBAR: HEIRS' PROPERTY ACROSS CAMDEN COUNTY — FIVE MUNICIPALITIES

Although Camden City has the largest absolute count of probable heirs' properties, the highest concentration is in Lindenwold. Heirs' property is a county-wide condition; these five municipalities, chosen to span the range of community types in Camden County, illustrate how the same underlying ownership condition can sit within very different local housing systems.

Municipality	HP	Tracts ≥6%	Vacancy	Invester-Owned	Median Value	Median Income
Lindenwold	9.7%	4 of 4	5.6%	9.1%	$167K	$63K
Camden City	7.7%	12 of 19	19.3%	20.8%	$105K	$42K
Lawnside	6.5%	1 of 1	14.2%	7.3%	$215K	$70K
Chesilhurst	6.0%	1 of 1	0.0%	2.2%	$215K	$90K
Cherry Hill	1.2%	0 of 16	0.7%	4.9%	$349K	$129K

Table 5. Heirs' property prevalence and co-occurring conditions across five municipalities. HP % = share of single-family residential parcels classified as probable heirs' property. All other metrics are tract-level averages within each municipality.

Each municipality reflects a distinct community context. **Lindenwold** is an inner-ring suburb developed around the 1969 PATCO Hi-Speedline terminus. **Camden City**, the county seat, has carried the weight of midcentury deindustrialization and ongoing redevelopment. **Lawnside** is the first independent self-governing Black municipality north of the Mason–Dixon line, with roots in the 1840s Underground Railroad community of Free Haven. **Chesilhurst**, also a historically Black community, has been a borough since 1887; its 0% vacancy reflects NEXUS™'s rural place-type adjustment, under which residential land vacancy is not counted in the vacancy index. **Cherry Hill** is the county's most populous and most affluent municipality. The same parcel-level methodology identifies meaningful heirs' property concentration across all five, but the appropriate intervention pathway in each is shaped by local housing market conditions, capacity, and community context, not by prevalence alone. exhibit different threshold effects. The framework is transferable; specific thresholds require local calibration.

The NEXUS™ Framework

NEXUS™ is a neighborhood-scale diagnostic framework that evaluates how housing pressure and protective capacity interact within census tracts. While the heirs' property analysis identifies parcels with likely unresolved ownership, NEXUS™ shifts the unit of analysis to the neighborhood and evaluates whether those ownership conditions exist within environments that amplify or buffer housing instability.

Risk Domain

The risk domain captures conditions associated with housing instability and ownership loss: heirs' property prevalence, property loss risk (foreclosure/sheriff's deed activity), investor ownership pressure, structural housing vacancy, and residential land vacancy. Indicators are directionally scored so that higher values correspond to greater pressure.[13]

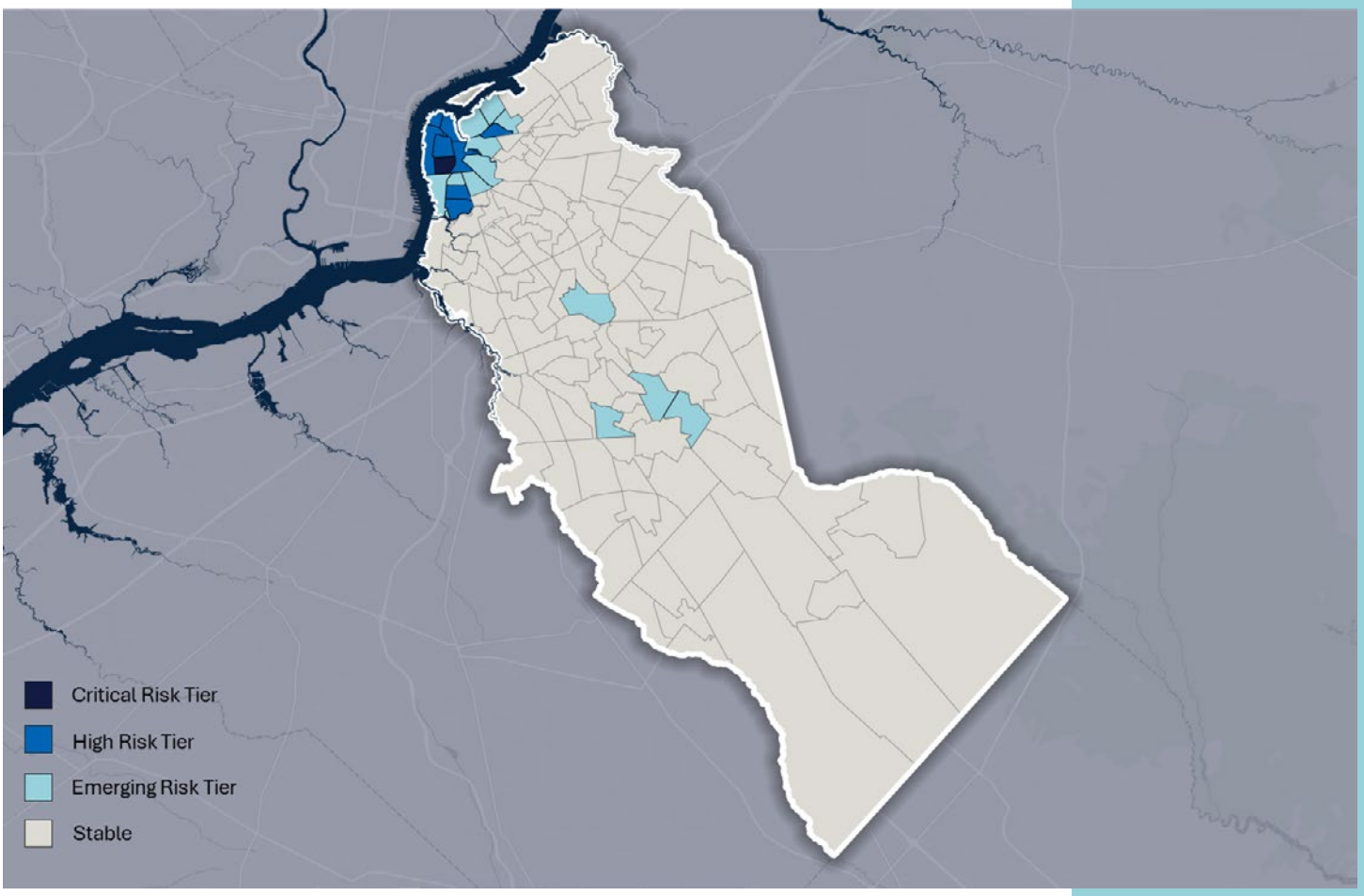


Figure 3. NEXUS™ risk classification. Risk classifications are spatially concentrated in the northwest cluster centered on Camden City. The county's sole Critical Risk tract and all High Risk tracts appear in this geography.

Capacity Domain

The capacity domain captures conditions associated with ownership stability and resilience: owner occupancy, long-term tenure (25+ years), median household income relative to county, and home value (market and assessed). Capacity indicators are scored so that stronger capacity offsets risk.

Net Pressure

Net pressure reflects the balance between aggregated risk and capacity scores. Tracts are classified into four tiers: Stable, Emerging Pressure, High Pressure, and Critical Pressure.

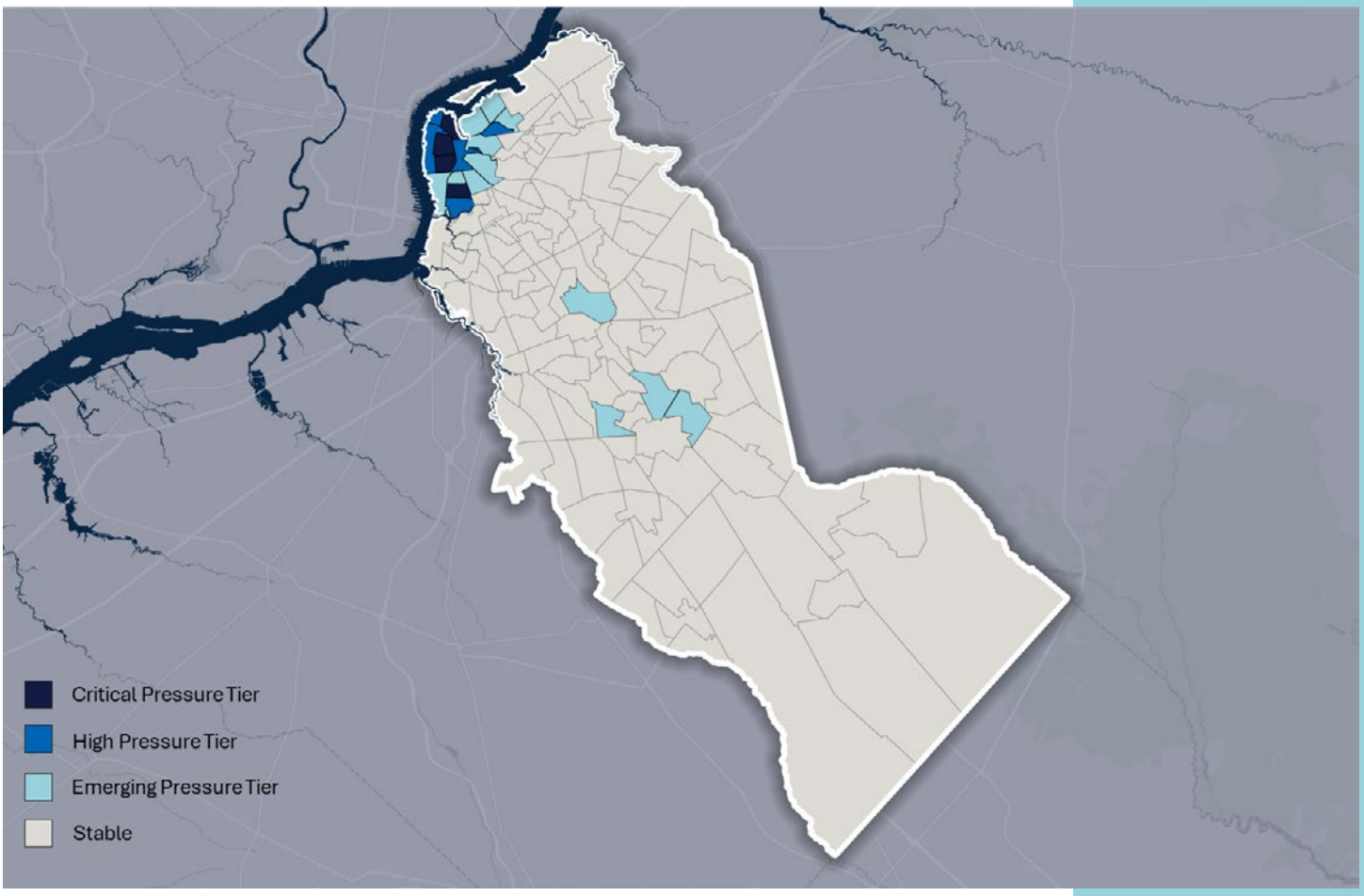


Figure 4. NEXUS™ Net Pressure classification. Critical and High Pressure tracts concentrate where elevated risk coincides with weak protective capacity—primarily in the northwest cluster.

Stable	Emerging	High	Critical
107 tracts	12 tracts	6 tracts	4 tracts
Avg HP: 1.6%	Avg HP: 4.2%	Avg HP: 7.8%	Avg HP: 8.6%

Table 6. NEXUS™ Net Pressure classification for Camden County's 129 census tracts.

Intervention Priority

The Intervention Priority Index combines heirs' property density and value suppression ranks to identify tracts where high concentration coincides with measurable value gaps—the places where resolving heirs' property is likely to generate the greatest neighborhood-scale impact.

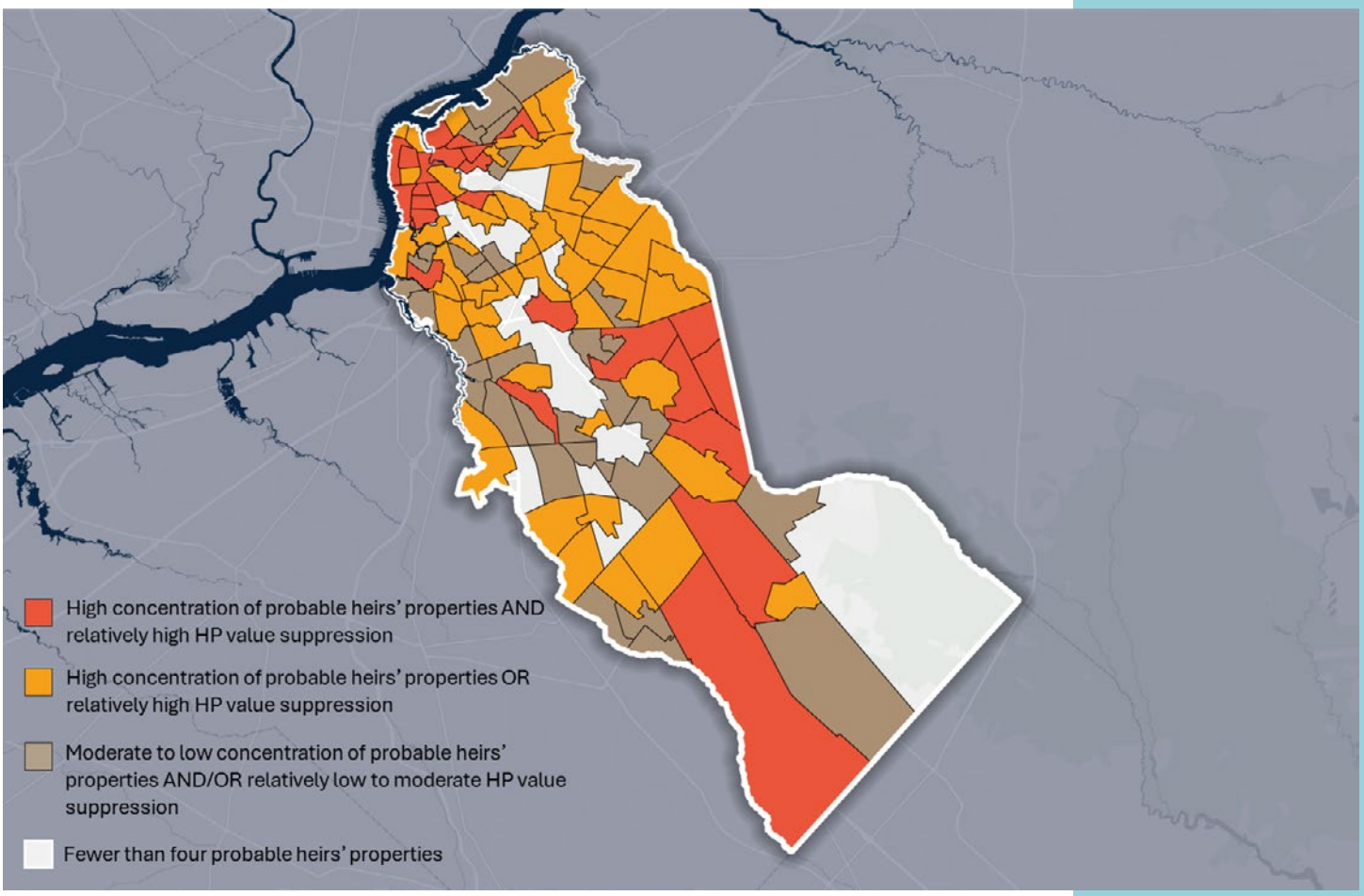


Figure 5. Heirs' Property Intervention Priority Index. Red tracts show high concentration AND relatively high HP value suppression. Orange tracts show either high concentration OR high suppression. Tan tracts show moderate to low levels of both.

Priority Tier Definitions

- **High Priority (29 tracts):** Above-median density AND above-median suppression. All 29 tracts show "trapped value" (heirs' property values below surrounding property values). These are the tracts where both the footprint and the value gap are substantial.

- **Medium Priority (59 tracts):** Either density OR suppression above median, but not both. These tracts warrant attention but represent either fewer affected parcels or smaller value differentials.

- **Low Priority (19 tracts):** Below median on both density and suppression. While individual parcels may still benefit from intervention, neighborhood-scale impact is limited.

Value Context

Value suppression is systemic, not parcel driven. Heirs' properties in Camden County are primarily embedded in already-suppressed neighborhoods rather than pulling down values in otherwise functioning markets. In structurally suppressed tracts, median heirs' property value ($115,083) is nearly identical to median non-heirs' property value ($115,177)—an average gap of just $93 per parcel.

Even where individual per-parcel gaps are modest, the cumulative wealth at stake is substantial when aggregated across tiers. Applying the priority classification above to the 107 tracts with four or more probable heirs' properties, total recoverable wealth concentrates sharply in the High Priority tier.

Priority Tier	Tracts	HP Homes	Recoverable Wealth	Value Gap / Parcel	Parcel Value Gap / Tract
High Priority	29	1,236	**$19.4M**	$15,717	$18,384
Medium Priority	59	1,794	**$10.0M**	$5,595	$20,865
Low Priority	19	233	**−$2.1M**	**−$9,174**	**−$13,105**

Table 7. Recoverable wealth by priority tier, across the 107 census tracts with four or more probable heirs' properties. Recoverable wealth = per-parcel value gap × HP homes. Negative values in the Low Priority tier indicate tracts where heirs' properties are worth more than surrounding non-HP parcels.

The table reports two measures of the per-parcel value gap, each of which answers a different question. Value Gap/Parcel divides total recoverable wealth by total HP homes across the tier to illustrate what the average HP family faces. Parcel Value Gap/Tract averages each tract's per-parcel gap across the 29 tracts to illustrate what the average tract in the tier looks like. The two numbers diverge—like the ~4× gap in the Medium tier—when a few small tracts have large per-parcel gaps that pull the tract-level number up, even though most HP families actually live in larger tracts with smaller gaps.

This pattern shapes intervention strategy: in suppressed contexts, title resolution enables families to access equity that is locked up by ownership barriers. The neighborhood-scale benefit comes from removing friction across many parcels, not necessarily from unlocking large individual value gaps.

SROI Connection: AFN's prospective SROI analysis estimates scenario-specific returns ranging from $2/dollar spent (avoided deterioration) to $40/dollar (avoided foreclosure). The highest-return scenarios are most likely to materialize in precisely the High Priority tracts this analysis identifies, where concentration, suppression, and weak protective capacity converge.

CASE STUDY

TWO TRACTS, TWO HOUSING SYSTEMS

Bergen Square and Woodlynne illustrate how similar-sized census tracts can produce fundamentally different housing-system conditions when heirs' property prevalence, vacancy, investor presence, and protective capacity diverge.

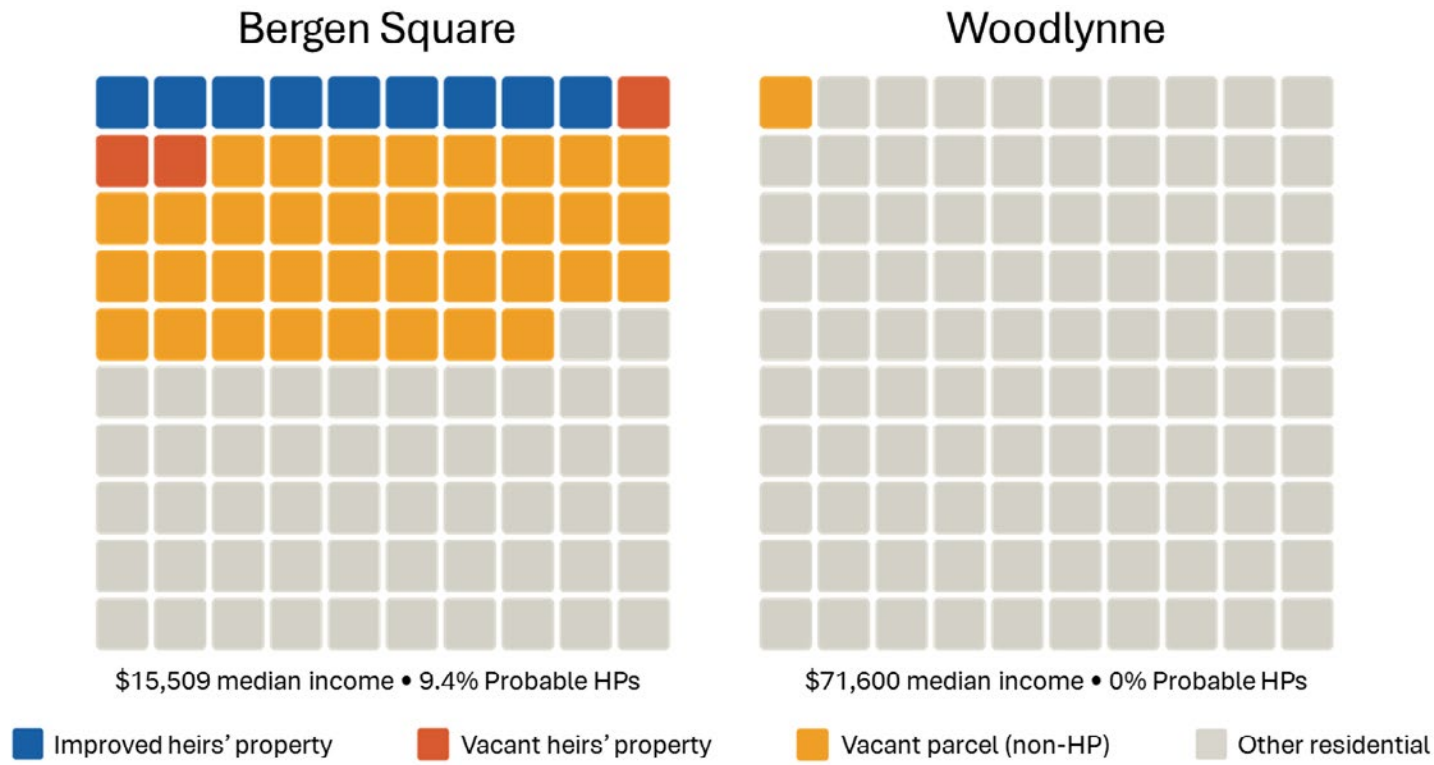


Figure 6. Distribution of residential parcels in Bergen Square and Woodlynne.

In Bergen Square, a high prevalence of heirs' property, 9.4%, coincides with exceptionally high vacancy (39%), creating conditions where acquisition and loss of local control can accelerate rapidly. Investor ownership is high (33%), but it is the interaction of investors with widespread vacancy and ownership instability—not investor presence alone—that drives elevated pressure.

Protective capacity in Bergen Square is limited: median household income is $15,509, long-term tenure is only 15%, and while owner occupancy exists (67%), it operates within a broader context of structural instability.

Woodlynne exhibits the opposite pattern. Vacancy is negligible (1%), long-term tenure is double that of Bergen Square (31%), median income is nearly five times higher ($71,635), and owner occupancy is 79%. These reinforcing capacity factors absorb market pressure and limit displacement dynamics.

Key Insight: Risk emerges from the stacking of ownership fragility, market pressure, and insufficient protective capacity, not from any single factor in isolation.

HOW TO USE THIS ANALYSIS

This analysis provides neighborhood-scale insight to support targeting, sequencing, and coordination in housing stability and wealth preservation efforts.

THREE LENSES, TWO TARGETS

This analysis uses three lenses, each answering a different question. **Prevalence bands** locate where heirs' property is concentrated. The **Intervention Priority Index** (Figure 5) identifies where resolving heirs' property most helps families — tracts where heirs' property concentration aligns with measurable value gaps and the largest aggregated wealth is recoverable for affected households. **NEXUS™ classifications** (Figures 3 and 4) identify where that work most stabilizes the surrounding community — tracts where unresolved title sits alongside vacancy, investor pressure, and weakened buffering capacity. In Camden County, the three lenses converge on the northwest cluster; elsewhere they diverge, and the right lens depends on whether the goal is family-level wealth preservation, neighborhood stabilization, or both.

Use this analysis ethically. Heirs' property data concerns real families and communities, many of whom are already navigating historical inequities in land ownership, legal access, and wealth transfer. Before publishing maps, sharing parcel-level flags outside trusted working groups, or presenting findings to funders or the public, users of this analysis should consult ethical-use guidance such as Green et al.'s Ethical Engagement in Heirs' Property Work: A Guide to Inform Dialogue and Practice.[13] Key practices include aggregating spatial detail above the parcel level in public releases, limiting precise visualizations to partners with an operational need to see them, and engaging community voices in decisions about how findings are framed and disseminated.

FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS AND LEGAL AID ORGANIZATIONS

- **Use parcel-level flags for direct outreach.** Each flagged probable heirs' property remains relevant for case-by-case work—legal aid, code enforcement, family engagement—even in low-prevalence tracts.

- **Use tract-level concentration to prioritize geography, then layer NEXUS™ to identify where capacity is weakest.** Tracts above the 6% prevalence threshold identify where heirs' property concentration is meaningful; within that set, NEXUS™ High and Critical Pressure classifications identify where weak protective capacity makes intervention most urgent.

- **Distinguish improved residential from vacant heirs' properties.** These represent different intervention pathways—housing preservation vs. land stewardship—though they often co-locate.

FOR FUNDERS AND POLICYMAKERS

- **Use NEXUS™ classifications to target investment.** The highest SROI scenarios (up to $40 per dollar invested for avoided foreclosure) are most likely to materialize in Critical and High Pressure tracts.
- **Recognize that thresholds are jurisdiction-specific.** The 6% threshold reflects Camden County's conditions. Other counties may exhibit meaningful concentration effects at different levels.
- **Connect heirs' property work to broader housing strategy.** Coordinated intervention is more effective than addressing heirs' property in isolation. Heirs' property intensifies existing pressure when layered onto vacancy, investor ownership, and capacity gaps, so the most leveraged work pairs heirs' property action with broader housing strategy informed by NEXUS™.

FOR RESEARCHERS AND ANALYSTS

- **The methodology is transferable; thresholds must be locally determined.** The three-component framework (parcel screening, tract aggregation, NEXUS™ contextualization) can be applied to other jurisdictions using comparable administrative data.
- **Interpret prevalence bands as descriptive groupings, and treat heirs' property concentration as a correlator rather than a driver of neighborhood risk.** Bands support side-by-side interpretation without implying causal relationships or statistical boundaries. NEXUS™ classifications are scored independently of heirs' property prevalence; heirs' property concentration frequently co-occurs with elevated pressure, but is not an input to it.
- **Be conservative in cross-jurisdictional comparison.** This analysis uses locally grounded administrative-record screening that may identify more likely heirs' properties than standardized national methods.

WHAT THIS ANALYSIS DOES NOT SUPPORT

- **DO NOT use prevalence estimates as legal confirmation.** Classifications represent likelihoods of heirs' property based on observable signals, not legal determination of title status.
- **DO NOT interpret suppression ratios as recoverable value.** Suppression metrics describe relative positioning, not absolute value loss or appreciation potential.
- **DO NOT apply Camden County thresholds to other jurisdictions without recalibration.** The 6% threshold reflects local conditions that may not transfer.
- **DO NOT use NEXUS™ classifications to predict individual household outcomes.** Classifications reflect relative neighborhood conditions, not forecasts for specific families.
- **DO NOT aggregate SROI estimates across outcome scenarios.** The $17K–$318K range reflects different outcome scenarios, not a range applicable to any single case.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that heirs' property is best understood as a context-dependent housing condition whose neighborhood-scale significance depends on spatial concentration and alignment with broader structural conditions.

Across Camden County, probable heirs' property is widespread at low levels but highly uneven at higher concentrations. Only a limited subset of census tracts exhibits materially elevated prevalence; heirs' property aligns most consistently with suppressed value environments, stacked housing risk, and weaker protective capacity within these high-prevalence tracts.

Central Finding

Concentration, not simple presence, is what makes heirs' property analytically meaningful. Where heirs' property is diffuse across a neighborhood, it behaves as background noise. Where it is concentrated, it consistently signals other underlying issues: vacancy, disinvestment, weaker economic capacity. Concentration itself is the priority signal for directing attention.

For service providers, legal aid organizations, and community development practitioners, this framework provides a principled basis for directing effort where concentration and structural conditions make it most consequential. For funders and policymakers, geographic prioritization informed by NEXUS™ classifications is consistent with directing intervention resources where prospective returns are greatest.

ENDNOTES

1 Throughout this report, the "single-family" residential parcel universe refers to Camden County's Use Code 2 parcels (1—-4 residential units), which is broader than single-family detached housing alone.

2 José Diaz, Heirs' Property: Investing to Preserve Wealth in New Jersey, Report, Asset Funders Network, 2026, https://assetfunders.org/resource/heirs-property-investing-to-preserve-wealth-in-new-jersey/.

3 JPMorganChase. "2024. Preserve Your Home, Safeguard Your Legacy: Tackling Heirs' Property," Policy Center. https://www.jpmorganchase.com/impact/policy-center/community-development/heirs-property (last visited January May 10, 2026). See also Cassandra J. Gaither et al., Cassandra J.; Carpenter, Ann; Lloyd McCurty, Tracy; Toering, Sara, eds., 2019. Heirs' Property and Land Fractionation: Fostering Stable Ownership to Prevent Land Loss and Abandonment,. Gen. Tech. Rep. SRS-244 , U.S. Forest Service, 2019, https://research.fs.usda.gov/treesearch/58543; . Asheville, NC: U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service, Southern Research Station.Pew Charitable Trusts. 2021. How 'Tangled Titles' Affect Philadelphia: Why homeowners' names must appear on official records-and how it hurts families and neighborhoods when they don't. Philadelphia Research and Policy Initiative, August. https://www.pewtrusts.org/-/media/assets/2021/08/tangledtitlesphilly_report_final.pdf. On the legal doctrine of undivided interest and partition sales, see also Mitchell, Thomas W. 2001. "From Reconstruction to Deconstruction: Undermining Black Landownership, Political Independence, and Community Through Partition Sales of Tenancies in Common." Northwestern University Law Review 95(2): 505-580. https://ssrn.com/abstract=1544380.

4 Garrett Hincken, How 'Tangled Titles' Affect Philadelphia: Why Homeowners' Names Must Appear on Official Records-and How It Hurts Families and Neighborhoods When They Don't, Philadelphia Research and Policy Initiative, Pew Charitable Trusts, August 2021, https://www.pewtrusts.org/-/media/assets/2021/08/tangledtitlesphilly_report_final.pdf. On the legal doctrine of undivided interest and partition sales, see also Thomas W. Mitchell, "From Reconstruction to Deconstruction: Undermining Black Landownership, Political Independence, and Community Through Partition Sales of Tenancies in Common," Northwestern University Law Review 95(2) (2001): 505–80, https://ssrn.com/abstract=1544380.

5 Gaither et al., Heirs' Property and Land Fractionation; see especially Thomas W. Mitchell, "Historic Partition Law Reform: A Game Changer for Heirs' Property Owners," in the same volume. The 100%—50%—25%—12.5% progression illustrates how shares divide among successive generations of co-heirs without formal estate administration.

6 Mitchell, T. "From Reconstruction to Deconstruction." 2001. See also JPMorganChase, "Preserve Your Home"; 2024; Hincken, How 'Tangled Titles' Affect Philadelphia. Pew Charitable Trusts 2021. On predatory acquisition patterns specifically, see also resources published by the Center for Heirs' Property Preservation at https://www.heirsproperty.org/, last visited January 2026.

7 Allan Mallach, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy. 2020. The Empty House Next Door: Understanding and Reducing Vacancy and Hypervacancy in the United States, Policy Focus Report, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, May 2018,. July. https://www.lincolninst.edu/publications/policy-focus-reports/empty-house-next-door. See also Hincken, How 'Tangled Titles' Affect Philadelphia. Pew Charitable Trusts 2021.

8 Rohit Acharya and Rhett Morris, "Brookings Institution. 2022. Reducing Poverty without Community Displacement: Indicators of Inclusive Prosperity in U.S. Neighborhoods," Article, Brookings Institution. September 13, 2022,. https://www.brookings.edu/articles/reducing-poverty-without-community-displacement-indicators-of-inclusive-prosperity-in-u-s-neighborhoods/. On mitigation benefits specifically, see Diaz, Asset Funders Network. 2026. Heirs' Property: Investing to Preserve Wealth in New Jersey. https://assetfunders.org/resource/heirs-property-investing-to-preserve-wealth-in-new-jersey/.

9 Althea Chang-Cook, "Why People of Color Are Less Likely to Have a Will," Consumer Reports, August 10, 2022, https://www.consumerreports.org/money/estate-planning/why-people-of-color-are-less-likely-to-have-a-will-a6742820557/. See also Caring.com. 2024. Rachel Lustbader, "2024 Wills and Estate Planning Study," Caring, January 9, 2026, Wills and Estate Planning Survey. https://www.caring.com/caregivers/estate-planning/wills-survey/2024-survey. Although estate planning among Black Americans has risen modestly since 2020, overall rates remain substantially lower than among White Americans and well below the levels needed to prevent heirs' property from forming at scale.

In part, this gap is attributable to an enduring gap in access to legal services. See Richard Rothstein, Richard. 2017. The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America. (New York: Liveright Publishing, 2017). On barriers to legal services specifically, see also Legal Services Corporation, . 2022. The Justice Gap: The Unmet Civil Legal Needs of Low-Income Americans, Report, 2022,. https://www.lsc.gov/initiatives/justice-gap-research. Legal Services Corporation 2022. See also JPMorganChase, "Preserve Your Home." 2024. Low-income households are disproportionately affected because the combined costs of probate, legal representation, and ongoing property tax obligations often exceed available household resources, compounding over generations.

10 Natasha Moodie, Keith Wiley, and Lance George, Fannie Mae and the Housing Assistance Council. 2023. A Methodological Approach to Estimate Residential Heirs' Property in the United States, Fannie Mae and the Housing Assistance Counsel, December 2023, https://ruralhome.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Heirs-Property-Research-Report-12.11.23-1.pdf. The $243 billion figure represents the estimated total value of probable residential heirs' property nationwide.

National prevalence estimates provide useful scale context but tend to diverge sharply from county-level work. Moodie and colleagues Fannie Mae and the Housing Assistance Council (2023) identified 181 probable heirs' properties in New Jersey using a conservative national methodology; Rebecca Dobbs and Cassandra Johnson Gaither (2023) identified 5,254 in the state using LightBox parcel data and a different identification approach. Rebecca Dobbs and Cassandra Johnson Gaither, " (How Much Heirs' Property Is There? Using LightBox Data to Estimate Heirs' Property Extent in the U.S.," Journal of Rural Social Sciences vol. 38 (2023): 11–30, https://open.clemson.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1013&context=jrss. , accepted manuscript). CoreLogic publishes a national estimate derived from a proprietary algorithm.

These figures span more than an order of magnitude, reflecting an inherent constraint of national methodologies: county-specific indicators—most notably municipal use codes, local recording conventions, and tax assessment idiosyncrasies—cannot be calibrated at scale, so national figures are best read as order-of-magnitude signals rather than counts. The 3,843 probable heirs' properties identified in Camden County alone via this study's locally -calibrated approach further illustrates that point.

11 Data sources for the parcel-, neighborhood-, and census tract-level analyses include: Camden County Board of Taxation. 2025. Camden County Property Assessment Search Hub, . https://www.taxdatahub.com/60d088c3d3501df3b0e45ddb/camden-county. Camden County Recorder of Deeds. 2025. Online Property Records,. https://www.camdencounty.com/service/county-clerk/online-property-records/. Camden County Clerk. 2026. Property Records Online. https://camden.newvisionsystems.com/clerksearch/. Regrid. 2025. Camden County, NJ. https://app.regrid.com/us/nj/camden. U.S. Census Bureau. 2026. Camden County Census Data. https://data.census.gov/. See also Data USA. 2025. Camden County, NJ. https://datausa.io/profile/geo/camden-county-nj; Zillow Home Value Index, 2019-–2025, accessed January 2026, https://www.zillow.com/research/data/; and Camden County, NJ. 2026. Foreclosure Sales Listing. https://salesweb.civilview.com/Sales/SalesSearch?countyId=1. Foreclosure and sheriff's deed activity are incorporated into the NEXUS Risk Domain as indicators of property loss risk.

12 Race shares reflect residential population composition of each census tract (ACS 2023 5-year estimates, Table B02001), not the race of property owners. Values are population-weighted means: larger tracts count for more in the average than smaller ones, so the figures reflect where people actually live rather than a simple average across tracts.

13 John J. Green; Johnsen, Grace; Johnson, Portia; Neal, Karama; Stein, Sarah; Thomson, Ryan; and Woods, Kara. 2026. Ethical Engagement in Heirs' Property Work: A Guide to Inform Dialogue and Practice. Southern Rural Development Center at Mississippi State University and National Policy Research Center at Alcorn State University, 2026,. https://scholarsjunction.msstate.edu/srdctopics-heirsproperty/6.

Related Resources

Maryann Flanigan Sutherland, Sarah B. Mancini, and Andrea Bopp Stark, New Jersey: State-Level Policy Scan of Laws Impacting Heirs' Property, Asset Funders Network, 2025, https://assetfunders.org/wp-content/uploads/AFN_NJ_Heirs-Property-Checklist.pdf.

José Diaz, Heirs' Property: Investing to Preserve Wealth in New Jersey , Asset Funders Network, 2026, https://assetfunders.org/wp-content/uploads/AFN_NJ-Heirs-Property-SROI.pdf.

For complete methodology, detailed results tables, and technical appendices, see the full technical report at https://assetfunders.org/wp-content/uploads/AFN_Investing_Heirs_Property_Report.pdf.

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