A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVES

Should We Fix It or Sell It As-Is?

A practical guide to help Personal Representatives weigh the costs, timing, and potential return of making improvements versus selling an inherited property as-is.

There Is No One-Size-Fits-All Answer.

Many inherited properties can be sold successfully as-is. In other cases, strategic improvements can lead to a higher sale price and a smoother transaction. The right choice depends on the property, the market, and your goals as Personal Representative.

COST
What will the improvements cost?

TIME
How long will the work take?

RETURN
Will the likely increase in value justify the investment?

RISK
What are the risks of unexpected costs, delays, or market changes?

> *The goal isn't to make the property perfect.*
> *It's to determine which improvements, if any, are likely to pay for themselves.*

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Not Every Repair Is a Renovation

Start with preservation. Look for inexpensive wins.
Be cautious about major improvements.

> *The goal isn't to create a perfect home. It's to protect the estate's asset and position the property for a successful sale.*

1 PROTECT & PRESERVE
ADDRESS WHAT MATTERS MOST

As the Personal Representative, your first responsibility is to secure and maintain the property and address safety hazards or conditions that could lead to further damage or code issues.

Secure the property
Change locks, ensure doors and windows work properly.

Address safety hazards
Fix active leaks, unsafe stairs or railings, and other dangerous conditions.

Maintain basic systems
Keep utilities on as appropriate. Address major system failures (e.g., no heat, no water).

Basic exterior care
Remove overgrowth, trim trees, maintain access, and prevent further deterioration.

Comply with safety requirements
Install or replace missing smoke detectors and carbon monoxide devices where required.

2 CLEAN & PRESENT
SMALL FIXES, BIG IMPACT

Relatively modest, low-cost updates can make the property more appealing to buyers by removing distractions and helping them see its potential.

Replace burned-out bulbs
A simple, inexpensive fix that makes a home feel cared for.

Fix leaky faucets
Take care of visible plumbing issues that can raise concerns.

Silence squeaky doors
A little lubrication can go a long way.

Minor repairs
Fix broken cabinet doors or hinges and other small items.

Paint where appropriate
A fresh coat of paint can help, but avoid covering up known problems.

Clean, declutter and tidy
A clean, organized space allows buyers to focus on the property's potential.

Light landscaping
Trim overgrown vegetation and improve curb appeal without major expense.

3 RENOVATE WITH CAUTION
HIGHER COST. HIGHER RISK.

Major renovations can be appropriate in some cases, but they come with higher costs, longer timelines, and greater risk. Carefully evaluate whether the expected increase in sale price is likely to exceed the total cost and delay.

Kitchen remodels
Often expensive and may not produce a full return.

Bathroom renovations
Can be costly and time-consuming.

Major flooring replacement
Consider whether the added value justifies the investment.

Extensive landscaping
Higher cost and ongoing maintenance.

Broad cosmetic modernization
May appeal to some buyers, but often does not result in a dollar-for-dollar increase in value.

Before undertaking significant improvements, consider the cost, carrying time, execution risk, and the likely increase in net proceeds to the estate.

> *Preservation protects the estate's asset.*
> *Improvements should have a reason — and a realistic expectation of return.*

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Make the Numbers Work

A higher sale price doesn't necessarily mean a better outcome for the estate.

Key Questions to Ask Before Spending Estate Funds

LOOK BEYOND THE SALE PRICE. CONSIDER THE BIGGER PICTURE.

1 What will it cost?

Get detailed, written estimates that include:

- Contractors and labor
- Materials and permits
- Cleanout, landscaping and staging
- A contingency for unexpected work

2 How long will it take?

Every additional week can add to the estate's costs:

- Taxes, insurance and utilities
- Maintenance and security
- Contractor timelines and permit or inspection requirements
- The risk of delays

3 What will buyers actually pay for?

An improvement doesn't automatically add its full cost to the sale price.

- Will the work make the property more marketable?
- Does it address a buyer objection?
- Is the added value likely to exceed the cost?
- Are there comparable sales to support the expected increase?

4 What could go wrong?

Even well-planned projects carry risk:

- Cost overruns
- Delays
- Newly discovered problems
- Changing market conditions

An Illustrative Example

These numbers are for illustration only. Actual results will vary based on the property, market, and scope of work.

SELL AS-IS A FASTER, SIMPLER APPROACH	
Expected sale price	**$800,000**
Preparation costs	$0
Additional carrying time	Minimal
Estimated net proceeds	**$800,000**

PREPARE & IMPROVE A POTENTIALLY HIGHER PRICE	
Expected sale price	**$850,000**
Less repairs/improvements	– $30,000
Less additional carrying costs (taxes, insurance, utilities, etc.)	– $6,000
Estimated net proceeds	**$814,000**

A $50,000 higher sale price becomes only about a $14,000 difference in net proceeds in this example — before considering other costs and risks.

Don't compare the as-is price with the improved price.
Compare the estate's likely net outcome under each strategy.

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Before You Authorize the Work

A good decision starts with the property — not with a contractor's proposal.

01 See the Property As It Is

Evaluate the property's current condition, including obvious deferred maintenance, buyer objections, and overall marketability. Don't begin with an assumption that it needs renovation.

Start with a clear, realistic assessment.

02 Establish the As-Is Baseline

Determine what the property could reasonably sell for today, in its present condition. This becomes the benchmark against which every proposed improvement should be measured.

Know the starting point before spending a dollar.

03 Price the Alternative

If you're considering improvements, identify only the work being seriously evaluated. Obtain realistic estimates, expected timelines, and likely carrying costs. Then estimate what the market may actually pay after the work is completed.

Look at the total cost — including time and risk — not just the repair bill.

04 Choose the Strategy

Compare the likely net outcomes under each option. Sometimes the best approach is to prepare the property. Sometimes a few inexpensive improvements make sense. And sometimes the right decision for the estate is to sell it exactly as it stands.

Choose the path that best serves the estate's overall interests.

REPAIRS DON'T ERASE DISCLOSURE CONSIDERATIONS

A Personal Representative may have different disclosure obligations than a conventional seller, but repairs should never be used to intentionally conceal a known condition. Questions about the estate's disclosure obligations should be directed to the estate's attorney.

WHERE SAM FITS

Sam can help establish the property's as-is market position, identify improvements buyers are likely to value, obtain and coordinate property-related services when appropriate, and compare the likely real-estate outcome of selling now versus preparing first.

Practical guidance. A smoother process. A better outcome.

The best strategy isn't necessarily the one that produces the highest sale price. It's the one that makes the most sense for the estate taking into account the total costs, risks, timing, and the estate's overall goals.

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