

HOME FOR GENERATIONS: GRANDMA'S WILL IS NOT ENOUGH

2019 ANNUAL REPORT

The Washtenaw County Treasurer and Probate Judge designed a program to assist families living in inherited homes. The project establishes ownership, allowing homeowners access to tax code entitlements, weatherization services, conventional financing, and other benefits.

The Board of Commissioners approved the Treasurer's and Judge's 2018 Focused Strategic Investment budget request for the Home for Generations demonstration project to advance County equity goals. Many families in need of probate assistance live in homes purchased informally during times of racial segregation, red-lining, and discriminatory lending.

This initiative provides targeted assistance to families living in informally inherited homes. Sometimes families do not understand the importance of recording deeds to demonstrate legal ownership or cannot afford legal assistance to untangle ownership rights of multiple generations. Clearing title establishes ownership and allows homeowners access to tax code entitlements and financing. It creates property wealth for families, often for the first time.

The Treasurer encounters families with unclear ownership when they have delinquent property taxes. In the past, Treasurer staff worked with individual attorneys and legal aid volunteers to provide ad hoc assistance. The Home for Generations project allowed for a more systematic approach. The Probate Court recruited attorneys and mediators to volunteer their time; probate and publication fees were waived. The Treasurer and Judge were able to create property wealth and ownership for families that would otherwise have been foreclosed upon for non-payment of taxes.

This exceptional partnership stabilized housing options, preserved homeownership, and transferred nearly \$700,000 in wealth to families in Washtenaw County.

- 2019 expenditures: \$ 772
- Ownership/estate settlements started and completed in 2019: 5
- Transfer of property wealth to families: \$ 664,800
- Ownership/estate settlements still in progress: 4



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