
Your Probate Real Estate Guide

Navigating the Sale of an Estate Property with Confidence

Losing a loved one is one of life's most difficult experiences. When that loss also involves managing or selling a property, the process can feel overwhelming — especially if you are unfamiliar with the legal steps required. As a Probate Real Estate Specialist serving Washington DC, Maryland, and Virginia, I am here to guide you through every step with patience, clarity, and expertise. You do not have to figure this out alone.

PART 1: Understanding Probate & What It Means for Real Estate

What Is Probate?

Probate is the legal process by which a deceased person's estate is administered and their assets — including real property — are distributed to heirs or sold. Not all estates go through probate, and the rules vary significantly depending on the jurisdiction.

Does the Property Have to Go Through Probate?

This depends on how the property was titled, whether there was a will, and which state the property is located in. Common situations that trigger probate include:

- The property was solely owned by the deceased with no joint owner or beneficiary designation
- There was no living trust in place at the time of death
- The estate exceeds the state's small estate threshold

Some properties may transfer outside of probate through joint tenancy, a living trust, or a Transfer on Death (TOD) deed. We will work together to determine what applies to your situation.

DC, Maryland & Virginia — Key Differences

Each jurisdiction has its own probate process, timeline, and court requirements. Here is a brief overview:

- Washington DC — Probate is handled through DC Superior Court. The process can take 6 months to over a year depending on the complexity of the estate.
- Maryland — Probate is handled through the Register of Wills in the county where the deceased resided. Maryland has a simplified process for small estates under \$50,000.

- Virginia — Probate is filed in the Circuit Court of the county or city where the deceased lived. Virginia also allows a simplified "small estate affidavit" process for qualifying estates.

Once we determine which jurisdiction applies to your situation, we will follow that state's specific procedures every step of the way. I work closely with trusted probate attorneys who can advise on the legal side while I handle the real estate.

PART 2: The Role of the Executor or Personal Representative

Who Is in Charge?

The Executor (named in a will) or Personal Representative (appointed by the court if there is no will) is responsible for managing the estate — including the decision to sell real property. This person has the legal authority to sign contracts, accept offers, and complete the sale, subject to court approval in some cases.

What Most Agents Don't Tell You

Many agents treat probate sales like a standard transaction. They are not. Here is what I make sure every executor and heir understands before we list:

- Court approval may be required before accepting an offer — this can add weeks to the timeline and buyers must be prepared for it
- The property is often sold "as-is" because the executor may not have full knowledge of the home's condition history — proper disclosure language is critical
- Multiple heirs means multiple opinions — disagreements between family members can delay or derail a sale if expectations are not set early
- Estate funds are limited — costly repairs or renovations may not be feasible; we price and market the property strategically to attract the right buyers
- Emotional weight is real — this is not just a transaction, it is someone's home and legacy. I approach every probate sale with the sensitivity it deserves
- Liens, back taxes, and mortgages must be resolved from the sale proceeds before any distribution to heirs — I help identify these early so there are no surprises at closing
- Timelines are longer — probate sales typically take longer than standard sales. Patience and clear communication are essential

PART 3: The Sale Process — Step by Step

Step 1 — Consultation & Legal Confirmation

We meet to discuss the property, the estate, and which jurisdiction's probate process applies. I will connect you with a trusted probate attorney if you do not already have one.

Step 2 — Property Assessment

We evaluate the property's condition, determine a realistic market value, and discuss whether any improvements make sense given the estate's situation. Many probate properties sell as-is — and that is perfectly fine.

Step 3 — Pricing & Marketing Strategy

I develop a customized marketing plan that attracts serious buyers who understand the probate process and its timeline. This reduces the likelihood of a deal falling apart mid-contract due to buyer impatience.

Step 4 — Listing & Showings

We list the property and I manage all showings, communications, and offers on your behalf so you can focus on your family and the estate administration.

Step 5 — Offer Review & Court Process (if applicable)

Once we receive an acceptable offer, I walk you through the terms, contingencies, and — if required — the court confirmation process. I have navigated this process many times and will make sure you know exactly what to expect.

Step 6 — Closing

We coordinate with the title company, estate attorney, and all parties to get to the closing table smoothly. Proceeds are distributed per the estate's legal requirements.

PART 4: My Commitment to You 🤝

Probate is one of the most sensitive and complex areas of real estate. My clients trust me not only because I know the process, but because I genuinely care about making this as smooth as possible during what is already a difficult time.

- I am a Probate Real Estate Specialist serving DC, Maryland, and Virginia
- I have a network of trusted probate attorneys, title companies, and vendors to support you through every phase
- I communicate clearly and consistently — you will never be left wondering what is happening
- I handle the complexity so you can focus on your family

Every estate situation is unique. I will work with you to understand yours and develop the right strategy — there is no one-size-fits-all approach to probate real estate.

A Note From Shawanda

Dealing with the loss of a loved one while also managing the responsibility of their estate is a lot to carry. My goal is to take the real estate piece completely off your plate so you can focus on what matters most — your family. I have walked many families through this process and I do not take that trust lightly. You will always have a straight answer from me, a clear next step, and someone in your corner who genuinely cares about getting this right for you. When you are ready, I am here.

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