



Probate Property Guide

Prepared for personal representatives and the families they serve

Daniel McDougall

Residential Real Estate | Seattle Bellevue Eastside

Better Advice Better Results

You've been handed a to-do list at one of the hardest times.

Being named personal representative is a big responsibility and an honor. But it often comes with more work than people expect. Along with the family conversations, the paperwork, and the grief, there is still a house that needs attention.

This guide will help you understand what typically happens with the property, how to prevent common problems, and give you clarity for making the many decisions ahead.

This guide is not legal advice. That's what your attorney helps you with. If you'd like help with the house, I'm happy to talk.

Daniel

206.335.8994 | daniel@danielmcdougall.com

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Overview – What Happens to the House

A general overview of what happens to the house, from opening the estate to receiving the proceeds. Every estate is different, so get advice for your specific situation. Talk to your attorney for help with legal procedures and working with the court.



STAGE	WHAT HAPPENS	HOW I CAN HELP
1 The estate is opened	The court appoints a personal representative, and your attorney explains what authority you have over the property.	Nothing yet. This step belongs to your attorney. Ask them when you can begin acting on the house.
2 The property is evaluated	You learn what the house is worth and what shape it is in.	I can walk through the property with you (virtual is an option). I prepare a clear, understandable market assessment. I help you identify issues with the property that might be urgent.
3 A decision is made	The estate and its beneficiaries decide whether to sell, keep, or transfer the property, and whether to sell as-is or prepare it first.	Lay out the options and numbers so the data is clear and your decisions are informed. Give you clarity regarding the market and expected timing. The decision is between you, your attorney, and your family. Expect no pressure from me.
4 The house is prepared	Belongings are cleared, repairs are made, and the property is made presentable.	Coordinate cleanout, repairs, landscaping, and vendors, and keep the property secure and maintained. Concierge full service or à la carte, you choose.
5 The house is sold	The home is priced, marketed, shown, and offers are negotiated.	Pricing strategy, proven marketing systems, strong negotiation centered on your needs, with clear, consistent communication throughout the process.
6 Closing and proceeds	The sale closes, and proceeds go to the estate for distribution as directed by your attorney.	Coordinate with the title company, buyer, and attorney through closing.

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Your First 30 Days – Checklist

If you need time to grieve and it's hard to get tasks done, reach out to someone you trust for help. Small steps now prevent expensive problems later. Check with your attorney before acting on anything involving the estate's authority or its belongings.

FIRST WEEK: SECURE AND DOCUMENT

- ☐ Confirm with your attorney what you're authorized to do with the property
- ☐ Change or rekey the locks, and track who has keys or codes
- ☐ If the house is vacant, secure all windows and doors, make sure exterior lights work, and turn them on at night
- ☐ Take dated photos and video of every room, inside and out, before anything is moved
- ☐ Set up mail forwarding so bills, notices, and packages don't pile up
- ☐ Collect valuables, important documents, and medications. Store them safely

FIRST TWO WEEKS: PROTECT

- ☐ **Call the homeowner's insurance company.** Inform them the owner has passed. Ask about coverage for vacancy. Many policies have time limits, and some will end the policy if requirements are not met
- ☐ Keep utilities on. Heat, power, and water protect the house from freezing, mold, and leaks. To save on utility costs in winter, 60 degrees F is usually enough to prevent freezing
- ☐ Confirm who is paying property taxes, insurance, and utilities, and keep every receipt
- ☐ Arrange regular check-ins on a set schedule (weekly is a good baseline) and look for leaks, pests, storm damage, or signs of entry
- ☐ Keep lawn, snow, and exterior upkeep going so the house doesn't look vacant

BY DAY 30: CLARITY

- ☐ List the ongoing costs of holding the house each month
- ☐ Note any repairs, deferred maintenance, or known problems
- ☐ Ask your attorney when you can begin clearing belongings and what to do about items heirs want
- ☐ Ask your attorney about the timeline for deciding whether to sell, keep, or transfer
- ☐ Decide whether you want a market assessment to understand the house's value and condition

Please wait on these until your attorney says it's okay

- Selling, giving away, or discarding belongings
- Letting anyone move in
- Making major repairs or renovations
- Signing anything that commits the estate

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10 Common Problems I Can Help Prevent

Most estate properties run into the same problems. Here is what they look like and some ways I can help.

01 The house sits empty.

Vacant homes attract break-ins, insurance issues, and neglect.

I set up a check-in routine and give suggestions to help secure the property.

02 Small maintenance turns into big repairs.

A slow leak or a clogged gutter gets expensive fast when no one is watching.

I flag issues early, before they compound.

03 Pressure to sell fast.

Investor offers and “we buy houses” letters show up quickly on estate properties.

I help you get clarity on any offer, giving you data on what the market would actually pay.

04 Heirs disagree about the property.

Everyone has needs and concerns. The solution is not always a quick sale.

Listening and understanding is the key. Together we make a plan that everyone can agree on.

05 There is far more stuff than anyone expected.

A lifetime of belongings can feel impossible to sort.

I coordinate cleanout and connect you with people who do this work.

06 No one knows the true condition of the house.

Surprises during a sale can cost you time and money.

I assess the condition up front so you have clarity and decisions can rest on facts.

07 Expectations about value don't match the market.

Sentimental value and market value are different things.

I provide a valuation built on comparable sales, one that holds up when questioned.

08 Contractors and vendors are hard to manage.

Finding trustworthy people, getting quotes, and scheduling all cost time.

I coordinate with a vetted list of reliable vendors, saving you time.

09 Selling at the wrong time.

Holding too long costs money, and rushing can leave money on the table.

I lay out the expected timing and numbers so you have clear choices.

10 Communication breaks down.

Heirs, attorneys, and vendors all need to be on the same page.

I assist you in keeping everyone informed and on the same page.

You didn't sign up to be a property manager.

My job is to handle the real estate side of the process, so you can focus on the estate and your family.

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The Probate Property Concierge

I will be one point of contact for everything you need, from the first walk-through to closing day. Here is what I can do.

1

Assess

Give you clarity on exactly what you have.

- Walk the property and document its condition, inside and out
- Prepare a detailed market assessment built on comparable sales
- Identify repairs, deferred maintenance, and issues that could affect value
- Estimate what clean-out, repairs, and preparation would cost and what they're likely to return
- Compare your options: sell as-is, sell after preparation, hold, etc.
- Project your estimated net proceeds under each option
- Provide a written Property Assessment

2

Prepare

Get the house stable, cleared, and market-ready.

- Secure the property: locks, lockbox, access control, and key tracking
- Set up regular property check-ins
- Coordinate estate clean-out, from light clearing to full hoarding situations
- Arrange estate sale professionals, donation pickup, junk removal, and movers
- Organize a walk-through for family to claim keepsakes, with the personal representative in control
- Coordinate repairs: plumbing, electrical, roofing, handyman, paint, flooring, and more if needed
- Arrange cleaning and landscaping
- Get competitive quotes from trusted vendors and oversee the work
- Offer pay-at-closing arrangements with vendors where possible, so the estate isn't out of pocket up front
- Advise on which improvements are worth doing and which aren't

3

Sell and Close

A smooth sale, without pressure.

- Set a pricing strategy that makes sense for you and the family
- Coordinate top-quality professional photography, video, and marketing
- Manage showings and buyer feedback
- Vet and present offers, and negotiate on the estate's behalf
- Handle buyer inspection requests and appraisal issues
- Coordinate with the title company, escrow, and your attorney
- Keep the closing timeline on track and resolve problems as they come up
- Confirm the property is delivered as agreed
- Provide your attorney with the documentation they need

Managing From a Distance

Living out of town doesn't mean handling the house alone.

- Virtual walk-throughs by video, so you can see the house in real time
- Photo and video updates as needed
- Remote signing and digital document handling wherever possible
- Keepsake selection for family through photos and video calls
- I'm your eyes and hands on the ground, so you don't have to travel for every decision
- Scheduled check-ins by phone or video, whichever you prefer

Communication with Compassion, Start to Finish

- A single point of contact, so you're never chasing answers
- Advice as you need it, with patience and understanding
- Clear updates on a schedule that works for you
- I never pressure any heir or beneficiary toward a sale

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Have an estate with real property?

I'm happy to provide a **no-obligation preliminary property assessment** and talk through your options with you, your attorney, or both.

About Me

I am married and have three kids. We love to play, explore, and relax together. We spend most of our exploration time on the west coast. We can tell you a lot of great gluten-free bakeries between Seattle and L.A.

I personally LOVE all things ocean and redwood trees. I love movies, gardening (still trying to grow watermelons in the PNW), spiritual pursuits, and solving problems.

I was born in Seattle. Aside from a few years in the redwoods of Northern California when I was young, I have lived around Seattle my whole life. I settled into the Eastside while going to University of Washington and have been here ever since. Some of my favorite places are Bellevue Botanical Gardens, Molly Moon's Ice Cream, Squak Mountain trails, and my own backyard.

My journey into real estate was rocky! After my grandpa died in 2009, I helped my mom clear out and prepare his house for sale. From there I tried my hand at house flipping. It was not a success, but I learned a lot! I got my real estate license and started helping people avoid the mistakes I made. I have helped over 250 families buy or sell all over Puget Sound and have had a lot of meaningful experiences. After 16 years I'm still enjoying meeting new people, solving problems, and helping families with their housing needs.

Visit my website to see reviews and testimonials: danielmcdougall.com

Get in Touch

Daniel McDougall

206.335.8994

daniel@danielmcdougall.com

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