**Immediate First Steps (Within 1-2 Weeks):**

**Some of this may seem overwhelming, but we can help you as your local resource here.**

* **Secure the Property:**
  + [ ] Change locks and secure all entrances.
  + [ ] Check for and address any immediate hazards (e.g., leaks, broken windows).
  + [ ] Arrange for immediate maintenance (lawn care, snow removal, etc.) to prevent further damage and comply with local ordinances.

* **Locate Important Documents:**
  + [ ] Deed to the property.
  + [ ] Will of the deceased (if applicable).
  + [ ] Insurance policies (homeowners, flood, etc.).
  + [ ] Property tax records.
  + [ ] Mortgage documents (if any).
  + [ ] Any existing leases or rental agreements (if applicable).
  + [ ] Utility bills.

* **Contact Key Professionals (Crucial for Out-of-State Ownership):**  **We can provide referrals.**
  + [ ] **Attorney specializing in probate and real estate in the *property's* state:** Essential for navigating local laws and inheritance procedures.
  + [ ] **Insurance agent:** Review and update existing insurance policies. Crucial for landlord coverage if renting. Ensure proper coverage for vacant property if applicable.
  + [ ] **Property manager in the area:** If renting is a strong possibility, contact property managers *immediately* to discuss services and fees.

**II. Property Assessment and Legal/Financial Matters (Within 1-2 Months):**

* **Determine Ownership and Legal Status:**
  + [ ] Work with the attorney to understand the terms of the will (if one exists) and the inheritance process in the property's state.
  + [ ] If no will exists, understand the intestacy laws of the property's state.  We can help provide guidance here.
  + [ ] File necessary paperwork with the probate court in the property's jurisdiction.
  + [ ] Obtain Letters Testamentary (if a will exists) or Letters of Administration (if no will exists) to prove legal authority.

* **Financial Matters:**
  + [ ] Determine if there are any outstanding debts or liens against the property.  We can provide help and guidance here.
  + [ ] Understand property tax obligations and payment deadlines.
  + [ ] If there's a mortgage, determine the payoff amount and assess if refinancing is advantageous.
  + [ ] Set up a dedicated bank account for property-related expenses.

* **Property Inspection (Critical for Investment Properties):**
  + [ ] Conduct a *thorough* inspection by qualified professionals (home inspector, plumber, electrician, HVAC specialist, roofer, etc.) to identify *all* potential issues. Factor these costs into your ROI calculations.
  + [ ] **Get quotes for necessary repairs and renovations.**
    - **We have teams to help with this.**

* **Decide on the Future of the Property (Investment-Focused):**   This is our specialty as we can buy as is, or help you keep the property as a long term cash flowing investment.
  + [ ] **Sell:** Analyze potential profit after all costs (repairs, closing costs, taxes). Is it a flip or a long-term hold?
  + [ ] **Rent:** Project rental income, expenses (including property management fees), and calculate cash flow. Is it a good fit for your portfolio?
  + [ ] **Keep (Unlikely as an investor unless strategic):** Analyze why you would keep it without renting or selling.

**III. Sale, Rental, or Continued Ownership (Ongoing):**

* **If Selling:** We can help here.
  + [ ] We are a cash buyer and work with other real estate professionals and investors if you decide to sell.
  + [ ] Handle closing procedures, including paying any applicable taxes and fees. We work with several local title companies to make this process easier.

* **If Renting:** We can help here.
  + [ ] Hire a property manager (highly recommended for out-of-state owners) or handle tenant screening, rent collection, and maintenance yourself (consider the time commitment).  We can help here.
  + [ ] Prepare a lease agreement that complies with local laws.
  + [ ] **Establish a system for tracking income and expenses.**
* **If Keeping:**If you decide to keep we can refer you to local handy companies and service providers.
  + [ ] Establish a plan for ongoing maintenance and repairs.
  + [ ] Ensure property taxes and insurance are paid on time.

* **Tax Implications (Crucial for Investors):**
  + [ ] Understand the tax implications of inheriting, owning, and renting/selling the property, including depreciation, capital gains taxes, and potential 1031 exchanges.
  + [ ] Consult with a tax advisor to optimize tax strategies.

**IV. Other Important Considerations:**

* **Travel:** Factor in the time and expense of traveling to the property's location, especially initially.
* **Communication:** Establish clear communication channels among family members and professionals involved.
* **Legal and Financial Advice:** Don't hesitate to seek professional advice throughout the process. Real estate and inheritance laws can be complex, and it's important to protect your interests and maximize your investment.
* **Local Resources:** Research local resources for contractors, service providers, and other necessary assistance. Build a network in the area.
* **Long-Term Strategy:** Align the inherited property with your overall investment strategy. Is it a short-term flip, a long-term rental, or something else?

[Schedule a 30 Minute Meeting - Virginia Estate Services](https://scheduler.zoom.us/chip-hoisington-borm13/ves)

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