

Philadelphia Homebuying Company Brotherly Love Real Estate Helps Tackle the City's Vacant Property Problem

Brotherly Love Real Estate helps Philadelphia owners sell vacant, damaged, or illegally occupied homes before problems grow.

PHILADELPHIA, PA, UNITED STATES, July 24, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Philadelphia has dealt with vacant and abandoned residential buildings for decades. Behind many of the boarded windows and deteriorating rowhomes are complicated stories involving deceased owners, inherited properties, financial hardship, deferred maintenance, tax problems, family disagreements, and owners who have moved away from the city.



Jon from Brotherly Love Real Estate

[Brotherly Love Real Estate](#), a locally owned Philadelphia homebuying company, is working to address the problem one property at a time by helping owners sell houses that have become vacant, damaged, difficult to secure, or too expensive to repair.

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Vacant houses don't stay neutral. Every month a property sits unsecured, the risk of water damage, break-ins, code violations, and neighborhood frustration grows.”

Jon Sanborn

A Philadelphia Building Safety Oversight Board report previously estimated that the city contained approximately 25,000 to 30,000 vacant structures. Although that estimate was published in 2015 and the precise number continually changes, vacant residential buildings remain a significant concern for Philadelphia. In its fiscal year 2025 budget proposal, the city announced a goal of cleaning and sealing more than 900 vacant buildings in a single year.

“When someone calls us about a vacant house, the house being empty is usually only part of the problem,” said Jon Sanborn, co-founder of Brotherly Love Real Estate. “There may be a leaking roof, unpaid property taxes, an estate that was never settled, people staying there without permission, or years of repairs that the owner simply cannot afford. These situations can snowball quickly.”

An unoccupied house can deteriorate significantly faster than an occupied one. A minor roof leak may go unnoticed until ceilings, flooring, and electrical systems have been damaged. A broken window or unsecured door can create an entry point for trespassers, unauthorized occupants, vandalism, theft, or illegal dumping.

Research conducted in Philadelphia has also demonstrated that abandoned housing can affect more than the individual property owner. A citywide randomized trial involving 258 abandoned houses found that full remediation, including installing functional doors and windows, removing trash, and clearing weeds, was associated with an [8.43% reduction in nearby weapons violations](#) and a 13.12% reduction in gun assaults compared with untreated properties.

“These properties affect the entire block,” Capozzolo said. “The neighbors are often the ones watching the house every day, reporting open doors, cleaning up trash, and worrying about who may be entering the building. Getting the property secured, repaired, and occupied again can make a meaningful difference.”

Philadelphia requires owners of unoccupied residential properties to do something about them. However, many owners do not intentionally neglect their properties. Some live hundreds or thousands of miles away. Others inherited a house they never expected to own and do not have



Vacant house in philly



Philadelphia rowhomes

the money, time, or construction experience needed to restore it.

Title problems can make the situation even more difficult. A Pew Charitable Trusts analysis found at least [10,407 tangled titles](#) affecting approximately 2% of Philadelphia's residential properties. A tangled title occurs when the person living in or responsible for a property does not have their name properly recorded on the deed, often because an estate was never formally handled after an owner died. Not every tangled-title property is vacant, but unresolved ownership can prevent families from easily repairing, refinancing, insuring, or selling a house.

"A lot of vacant houses aren't owned by some giant corporation that has forgotten about them," Sanborn said. "Sometimes five or six relatives inherited the property, nobody knows who is responsible, and everyone assumes someone else is handling it. Meanwhile, the taxes, violations, and repairs continue to build."

Brotherly Love Real Estate purchases Philadelphia houses directly from property owners in as-is condition. Sellers do not have to clean the house, remove unwanted belongings, repair structural damage, replace outdated systems, or prepare the property for showings.

The company can also evaluate properties involving fire damage, water damage, code violations, probate, inherited ownership, difficult tenants, vacant conditions, or unauthorized occupants. According to the company, its team has more than 10 years of homebuying experience and has helped more than 100 Philadelphia-area homeowners. Brotherly Love Real Estate generally offers closings in three weeks or less, while allowing sellers to select a later closing date when additional time is needed.

"We're not claiming that selling is the right decision for every property owner," Capozzolo said. "Some owners have the resources and desire to renovate the house, and that can be a great outcome. But other people need a realistic exit that doesn't require them to invest another \$50,000 or spend six months managing contractors."

Vacant properties are particularly difficult for owners who live outside Pennsylvania. Traveling back and forth to monitor a house, meeting contractors, responding to violations, removing debris, changing locks, and checking for unauthorized occupants can become a second job.

In other cases, owners delay taking action because they believe the property is too damaged to sell. Brotherly Love Real Estate evaluates houses regardless of condition and bases its offers on the home's current value, necessary repairs, comparable sales, and the expected cost of returning the property to usable condition.

"The longer a house remains vacant, the fewer easy solutions tend to remain," Sanborn said. "A property that needs cosmetic work today may need a complete renovation two years from now. Our message to owners is simply not to ignore it. Explore the available options while you still have choices."

After purchasing a property, Brotherly Love Real Estate may repair and renovate the house so that it can return to productive residential use. Restoring an existing Philadelphia rowhome can preserve housing, improve the appearance of the block, and relieve neighbors from the uncertainty created by a deteriorating building.

The company's founders believe private homebuyers, contractors, neighborhood organizations, residents, and city agencies all have a role in reducing vacancy and blight.

Brotherly Love Real Estate encourages owners of vacant houses to evaluate every available option. Depending on the circumstances, that may include securing and renovating the property, resolving estate or title issues, listing it with a real estate agent, transferring it to another family member, or selling directly to a local homebuying company.

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